

# WIRE

**THE WIRE** ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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**Frederic Rzewski**

**Super\_Collider**

**Bernhard Günter**

**Susie Ibarra**

**The People Band**

**DJ SHADOW**

**I spit on your groove**

**Murcof**

**The Sealed Knot**

**Taj Mahal Travellers**

**Otomo Yoshihide**

**Sonic Youth**

**Zeitkratzer & Lou Reed**

**Vincent Gallo**

**Coil**





## Sónar 13.14.15 June

### 9<sup>th</sup> Barcelona International Festival of Advanced Music and Multimedia Art

**Sónar de Dia** tuxedomoon, jarek schaefer, yasunao tone, chrisian merckxy, gotticatt, babel ogatha, dj shakira, wcknoise, golan leviv, bling, once11 fix, retrayou, orn ambarchi, pan sonic + peaches, balago, domestic, ito + zbgniw karkowski, gaibz, fran campos, 08001, rrmounce, remi, 5o5o vs, ozeas bap, mxv tundra, coloma, the congoisund, axel domer + agustí fernández, funkbox, monkey, lady k @ packa, dj muerto, robert lamart, golan leviv, steve, aree3 **Showcases by:** ranya tune bonobo, dk (sold steel), the cinematic orchestra, onilong musorok agf, full swing, tmeblind, gold chains, twisted nerve, andy votal + sirconical, mum & dad, majce, escudadori sudoca, bnh, junz, wyz, kópez, fragi discos, audiporu, fantasieo anemides, morr music- iean, thomas morr, manual, lei puna, iigerbesti wotibly, dj/rupture, cex, kod506, kareoke kirk-thorstein litz, donia regina, wachael garland, the leaf label musorl, tony morrey, manitaba, plug research, chassio, safety scissors, dntel, wmf, highfish, nikakos, kosa, shalplest massimo, goem, 386 dx, starplest soundsystem, french music office, gail, m83, doctor l, maul, helsinki savikko, didier & anonymous, opl bastards. **SónarLab sets:** kitchen motors, traum, nylon, litop, ooze bap, wave music & clicktracks, third ear, domul, starwhores, blue room, city rockers, city centre offices, disonnet & mr bongo, mental groove, kolivrecords, progressive form. **Sónar de Noche** pet shop boys, crossover, arthur baker, arto lindsay, rado boy, dj krush, slim dj set, vitalic, brooks, soul of man, paco osuna, zero, yo la tengo, roger sánchez, john digweed, lamb, alison goldfrapp, luomo, funk d'void, bga, soul designer, soul center, john tepada, sidoral, nacho marco, zero, fred guzzo, jeff mills, carl cox, nichie hawtin, s i futures, iyo & bushwackal, mr scruff, anti-pop consortium, oscir muleiro, mr len, sólo los solo, d'wachmen, wagon cooken', dj dal costa, j l magayo, big mic. **Showcases by:** b-pitch control ellen allen, modeselektor, freidz, epm/keep digger' lark degorgio, ian o'brien, mark shade, straight ahead, dominico ferrari, sequel, earthbound

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# Editor's Idea

A reader on this month's Letters page is convinced we are trying to brainwash him into listening to jazz. How times have changed: it doesn't seem very long ago since we were getting letters from apologetic jazz fans complaining that the magazine was trying to dull their senses with repetitive beats. The truth is, jazz, or more specifically, the freedom impulse of the mid-60s to early 70s, seems to be trying to force us to take notice again.

Music in the age of Cage and after has been extremely malleable to complement such utopian drives to freedom. Some look for the 'Omni' or group mind (No-Neck Blues Band, Jackie O Motherfucker, Taj Mahal Travellers, AMM, MEV); others go easy on the transcendentalism and heavy on the pragmatism.

The history of anarchy in the UK has been on my mind recently, and not just because The Sex Pistols have crawled out of the wormwood just in time for this month's Golden Jubilee festivities. Just around the corner from my dwelling in East London, I've discovered, like the former HQ of the Angry Brigade, a bunch of politically engaged hippies in the early 70s who never had truck with the passive peace and love

vibes of flower power, calling instead for an art-inspired revolution. Meanwhile, my upstairs neighbour tells me he's been filming at the Grass House, the residence of the enduring anarcho-punk collective, for a planned documentary. It seems that Grass founder Perry Rimbaud was directly inspired by teenage years spent in the company of one Terry Day in the suburban town of Dagenham. Day is one of English free music's forgotten heroes, but he surfaces in Julian Cowley's account of The People Band, an all but forgotten performance group active from the mid-60s even before the appearance of AMM, whose methodology (or lack of it) and collective chaos now appears extremely prescient of later drives to freedom. As one of this year's great phonographic achievements, the David Toop-compiled *Not Necessarily "English Music"* CD, illustrates, there is a vast archive of local experimental activity which has fallen under the radar, and which several hunters are currently doing their best to chase to ground. The first heading of The People Band for many years occurs on that compilation, and the most high profile former member of that group – the film director Mike Figgis – is

remoured to be contemplating issuing recordings of what remains of the PB's ramshackle recorded legacy. Perhaps Figgis's recent experiments with film as a real-time medium in works like *Timecode* and *Hotel* have their distant origins in his experiences with this extraordinary collection of open minds that sought for significance and release 'in the moment'.

When considering musical groups that chimed in with the spirit of change that was abroad around 1968, the ensemble Musica Elettronica Viva quickly spring to mind. Frederic Rzewski's free improv/noise unit caused a motus rupture of sonic space during their electronic derangements, as a clutch of recent reissues of their music, such as the incredible, cacophonous live recording *The Sound Pool* on BTV/Actuel, demonstrate. (One wonders whatever happened to 'Bert', listed as one of the musicians in the sleeveless with no further comment? Answers to the usual address.) Philip Clark's article on Rzewski is timely, as the three original members of MEV – Rzewski, Alvin Curran and Richard Terleborg – are reuniting the group's fuse at a festival in Ferrara, Italy this month (see Out There for details).

ROB YOUNG



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# Letters

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**Letters should include a full name and address**

## Copyright noticed

Received *The Wire* 219 this morning, and was delighted to see the magazine addressing some of the grey areas around copyright law. As you may be aware, the Arts Council of England is obliged to implement visual artists' resale rights in England during the next couple of years. I am not sure about any other updating of the main provisions of the 1998 rules and regulations are not a priority for the current government!  
**Keith Arneworth** Sheffield, UK

## Word to your mother

Thanks for getting Vanilla Ice to write the Epiphanies from *The Wire* 219, even if it was under a pseudonym.  
**Simon Fay** via email

I disagree with Andrew Bowman's letter regarding Dave Tompkins (*The Wire* 218). I think Mr T's reviews are what keep me coming back to *The Wire* each and every issue. Why not get him on some cover stories? I've thought about starting the Dave Tompkins Fan Club. For those interested, email me at [join\\_bazillion@yahoo.ca](mailto:join_bazillion@yahoo.ca).  
**Jon Knowles** by email

## Everybody must get cloned

Contrary to the written statements/beliefs of your publication, as co-author (with Culturecide and Huey Lewis & The News) of the Dictionary piece, "Heart Of Rock 'N' Roll (Is The Profit) [none-HeartoffinRmp3]", as mentioned in the article on bootlegs (*The Wire*, *The Wire* 218), the mission statement of the audio file was a PRO-CLONING statement. Your document stated that the file was anti-cloning. This is incorrect. Thank you for defacing our product with your misse-propagated mistruths. It will take several lifetimes to remove this information from the collective conscious. I could be spending my time talking to people who share my beliefs, but instead I'm going to have to deal with the one, maybe two emails I will receive from your under-researched article. Also, for your edification, the rant is more of a statement against the illogical rules of heterosexuality on society. Can six billion humans be wrong? Pro-cloning just goes along with this theory.

Here are the statements expressed in the track, to

hopefully make it clearer, since maybe the audio was poorly mixed by me: "Excuse me, but this is old news, let me turn this down/Did you know that over 50 per cent of the binarias people eat cannot reproduce naturally?/Face it folks, humanity (homo sapiens) have left their mark on the earth, there is no going back/If we don't start practising cloning now, we will not see the death of this planet, the sun or everything as we know it/Look, heterosexuals have fucked around long enough, why not let the scientists fuck around too?/Honestly, if you were to meet two people, would you really be able to determine which was a clone?/Does it matter if a person is a clone? Whatever." If you need further clarification, I'm willing to think about elaborating further.

Also, Jay Division did not create the song "Closer"; "Closer" was created by Nine Inch Nails. Thanks again for publishing that article. It was a very good read - lots of stuff I didn't know. Just wish my statement wasn't misunderstood. Oh well.  
**Peter Andrew Lopez** Scarsdale, USA

## America, where is the love?

I couldn't help but notice that in recent months you've attracted the comments of a couple of indignant Manhattanites concerning Ben Watson's contributions (*The Wire* 218, 217, 218). For what it's worth, I'd like to comment on this matter.

I personally have no objection to Watson's "obscure Marxist reference[s] and anti-capitalist slant", although I am sometimes quite baffled by how they shape his aesthetic preferences. I've read his book *Art, Class And Cleavage*, which I found quite intermittently brilliant and hilarious (if not frequently baffling). Regardless of my opinion about the content of his contributions to *The Wire*, I do feel that his presence as a contributor helps add to what is already a very strong and multifaceted publication. Were he block-quoting extensive excerpts from Adorno or Gramsci, then perhaps he might merit some form of editorial censure; but as it is, this is very far from the case.

I guess one might conclude that Americans are, by and large, very phobic about having talk of art and music tainted with such (allegedly) extraneous concerns as social, cultural and political issues - if not adverse to "over-intellectualisation" of said

subjects in general. As sweeping a generalisation as this might be, certain letters that you've received and published in the past would seem to bear this out. Whatever the case, I look forward to the "academic", "chintz-stoking musings" of Watson, Toop, et al each month, and would consider it a much bleaker world if your magazine did not provide a venue for such critics.

Keep up the great work! (And Power to the People, I suppose.)

**Graham Sanford** Chicago, USA

## Speakers corner

I really like your sound system (Charts, *The Wire* 216). Now I only wish to know what speakers are hooked to that one-eyed V-meter vintage NAD.  
**Giuseppe De Maio** Salerno, Italy

*Not a pair of Galante Buckingham, unfortunately - Ed*

## Unearthed treatise

I very much enjoyed the article on Cornelius Cardew in *The Wire* 214. Unfortunately, author Julian Cowley does not mention an early (1976) recording on Advance Records (FGR 215) by Wisconsin pianist Ellsworth Snyder which includes realisations of several sections of Cardew's *Treatise*. Thanks for noting this information.

**Steve Nelson-Roney** Milwaukee, USA

## Voices in my head

Your magazine is covertly trying to brainwash me to listen to jazz. I confess I didn't notice at first, but I've got your number now, as plain as day. You're fooling no one, especially not me. Don't pretend it isn't true, you know it is. Keep up the good work.

**Martin Reed** via email

## Corrections

**Issue 219** In the Directory, the URL for the Celebrate Psi Phenomenon label should have been listed as: [brchville.freelyellow.com/catalogue.html](http://brchville.freelyellow.com/catalogue.html) (ie with no www. prefix).

**Issue 218** In Global Ear: Winnipeg, the name of the local electronics unit Not Half was written incorrectly as Not J. □

## Coming next month

# Faith & Power

Make your faith in *The Wire* stronger by submitting your work to receive a free copy of a complimentary *Journal of the Wire* or a complimentary free jazz label, 100-Disk, and the *Wire* back cover for details.

**The Wire 221: on sale from 20 June**

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# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.  
Compiled by The Trawler

Thunderboy's treated vinyl

Turntable tearaway: Forget Christian Marclay, Martin Tietz, Grandmaster Flash and Grand Wizard Theodore. The true foundations of experimental turntablism have been revealed, thanks to archive recordings just released on the Table Of The Elements label. Minimal master **Tony Conrad** has executive produced *Thunderboy*, a compilation of hitherto unreleased tracks by his son Ted, then aged 22 months, in which Conrad Jr (no doubt inspired by John Cage) deftly anticipates the use of the turntable as instrument, not to mention the current craze for bootleg pop reconstructions, as early as 1974. In a daring mash-up of hits such as "Puppy Love", creates a series of hypnotic loops that deconstruct the banality of pop while simultaneously celebrating its timelessness. For the record, on a blind test. The Trawler could have sworn it was a new John Oswald record. Info at [www.thisandwalkingcompany.com](http://www.thisandwalkingcompany.com) >> Latest releases from the Tzadik camp in downtown New York show **John Zorn** celebrating magical spirit Aleister Crowley with his new CD *140 Music In Sacred Red*. Inspired, apparently, by the works of both Crowley and film maker Kenneth Anger, the composition in seven movements is a hypnotic swirl of alchemy, metaphysics and mysticism featuring guest musicians Bill Laswell, Mike Patton, Jennifer Charles, Greg Cohen, Cyro Baptista, Rebecca Moore, Jim Pugliese and others. Tzadik also throw down new releases by Jamie Saft and the shamanic percussionist Z'ev this month. Info at [www.tzadik.com](http://www.tzadik.com) >> Numbers up: Fans of the Irail label's Conet Project CDs, which highlighted the mysterious output

of shortwave Numbers Stations, will be intrigued by a new composition by Cyprus born musician Yannis Kyriakides. **A ConSPIRACY Centate** is an electronic work juxtaposing the enigmatic coded transmissions with the ancient oracle of Delphi. He will perform the piece at the Kettle's Yard gallery in Cambridge (10 June, 8pm, £7). For details, call 01223 352124 or go to: [www.kettleyard.cam.ac.uk](http://www.kettleyard.cam.ac.uk) >> **Late Junction**, the BBC Radio 3 home of an eclectic mix of New Music from around the world, courtesy of presenters Verity Sharp and Fiona Talkington, has launched a record label. Its first burst of activity includes four CDs, by John Adams, soundscape artist Max Richter, Early Music ensemble the David Rees-Williams Trio, and a compilation, *Diversions #1*. "Shows just what an important part Late Junction has played in the musical life of the country since its launch two and a half years ago," Talkington says, modestly. Well, she would, wouldn't she? >> Nowstage: late news reaches us that **Mati Klarwein**, the magic realist painter of record sleeve art on Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, *Live-Evil*, Jon Hassell's *Dream Theory In Malaya* and the larger than life, ubiquitous accomplice of the likes of Miles, Jimi Hendrix and Carlos Santana in the late 60s and early 70s, died on 7 March this year at his home in Mallorca. He continued painting and writing throughout his life. A full moon 'howl-up' is planned in his memory on 22 August in San Rullon, Mallorca; and a monograph collecting his paintings, stories and other writings is planned for 2004. >> **John Szewd**, author of the definitive biography of Sun Ra, *Space Is The Place*, is set to publish his *Life Of*

Miles Davis this autumn. Published by William Heinemann, the 400 page book intends to fill in the gaps left by the ever proliferating myths around Davis's life, as well as emphasizing the trumpeter's important role as political figure and black icon. >> Check your head: **Headspace** is a movie in progress attempting to document the worldwide electronic music scene. Since the Detroit based production company can't be everywhere at once, despite their best intentions, they're calling for contributions from, well, anyone out there really. Interested parties should go to the Website at [www.headspacemovie.com/press](http://www.headspacemovie.com/press) >> Caught napping: In an interesting twist on the Napster debate, maverick countercultural figure **Joe Byrd** has urged a judge to rule against the record company Columbia in a case the label has brought against Napster. The reason? Byrd alleges he has never been paid a cent in royalties for the self-titled album by his group United States Of America and the later *Joe Byrd And The Field Hoppes*. Having his music available for free, Byrd maintained, is preferable to Sony-Columbia continuing to make money at his expense. Full details of the storm can be found online at [www.salon.com/tech/feature/2002/04/23/copy\\_right/index.html](http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2002/04/23/copy_right/index.html). >> 'No case' is the new 'lower case': The **UK Air Guitar Championships** is out on the road this month for a 25 date monsters of virtual rock circus. Hosted by Brighton's Black Sabbath crew, you can see mirror-practising wannabes hitting imaginary whammy bars and wagging those tongues from 1 June. For full details of the tour, go to: [www.ukairguitar.com](http://www.ukairguitar.com). □



## Death Row

How would Mike Patton spend his last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

### Three records

David Byrne: *The Conversation OST*  
Sacred Rhythms: *Of Haitian Vodou*  
Silver Mission: *Quartet For The End Of Time*

### One film

*In Cold Blood*

### Three visitors

Destiny's Child

### Last meal

A 72 ounce steak from The Big Texan, in Amarillo, Texas

### Final message for the world

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"It all started on a Tuesday," reflects the softly spoken Fernando Corona, aka Murcof, referring to his exquisite debut album *Martes*—Spanish for the day of the week it was named after. The record's nine tracks offer a more melancholy take than usual on minimal Techno, featuring an array of stark introspective moods that combine electronics, signal processing and contemporary "Holy Minimalist" orchestral strings and choruses. In Mexico, this rarefied combination has already led to the misconception that his music is overtly intellectual, aimed only at certain enlightened crowds.

"There was nothing pretentious about the idea behind Murcof," claims multi-instrumentalist Corona, who was born in the Mexican border city of Tijuana. "I was playing around with some new software I had downloaded from the internet, and processed some sounds out of my contemporary classical CD collection. The basis for *Martes* is very simple: to retain the mood and intention of the original sound sources while at the same time transforming them into something entirely new. I feel that the most important aspect of Murcof has to do more with emotion than with intellectualism."

Corona's modesty on this issue has more to do with his humble background than with any aversion for so-called "serious" composition. In the early 70s, his family left the bustle of Tijuana and migrated south to the quieter and simpler atmosphere of Ensenada, a small fishing port known to locals as the "Cinderella of the Pacific." There, at an early age, he tapped into his father's record collection. His childhood soundtrack was filled with the songs of The Beatles, The Carpenters, classical music and ranchero singer

Vicente Fernandez. He confesses that the first electronic music he was exposed to was the pomp of French synth maestro Jean Michael Jarre, when a friend of his father's gave him a cassette of *Oxygene* at the age of 11. "Probably the most enduring impression of electronic music I have comes from an album of Jon Santo interpreting Bach compositions with his Arp 2600, Roland SH-2000, Roland SH-1000 and Farfisa Synthesizer," recalls Corona. "The sounds were so otherworldly and strange to me that I immediately knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

The parallel between Jon Santo's Christian synthesized electrons and Murcof's software-refracted take on Holy Minimalism may be a little far fetched, but the religious backdrop of both recordings is certainly uncanny. "Maybe only in the sense that Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki and György Ligeti were fighting the [Soviet] imposed atheism of communism through this hopeful and sombre music," he elaborates. "This subversion is what becomes so fascinating about this type of music. The only thing I worry about is that my music doesn't age as badly as Santo's did."

For seven years Corona played keyboards in an avant rock outfit called Sonos. When the group disbanded in 2000, he returned to live in Tijuana, where he became involved with the rising Nortec movement, founded by artists whose electronica incorporated Norteño marching drum traditions. His Terrestre project was one of the most successful expressions of this Norteño Techno aesthetic, but Corona soon grew frustrated with the way things were being handled within the Collective's inner circle. "There is so much you can do with a great idea like Nortec," he asserts. "It helped put Mexican electronica on the map, but I

definitely needed to balance Terrestre's bombastic and hedonistic stance with a more intimate approach to electronic music."

Corona currently shuffles both projects. He tours constantly as Terrestre within Mexico, but it's his Murcof project that is finally winning him attention abroad. The Context: Free Media label, run by San Francisco Tech-minimalist Suleikha, released his *Monotón* EP at the end of last year to critical acclaim. Released in Mexico through the tiny Static Discos label in February, *Martes* has just come out in the UK on Leaf, who have helped Murcof land gigs at this year's Mutek and Sonar festivals.

"I'm just glad that I am one of these Mexican electronic artists who are finally being discovered," he declares in reference to the recent internationalization of artists like Panóptica, Rusort, Fax and Loopdrop. "It took many years to find a voice that made sense and that was confident enough for us to search for other opportunities outside Mexico. It was not easy."

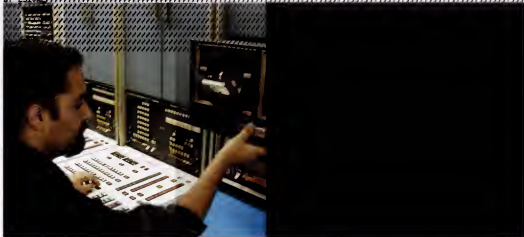
And the future? "I vaguely have an idea of what the next Murcof instalment will be like," hazards Corona. "It will probably contain the same type of introspection and emotion, but with a different approach towards the sound source. I'm thinking of orchestral sounds and other possibilities, but it's too early to really tell what will happen. The most important aspect of this process is not being too fanatic about the tools I work with and getting lost in the process. The end result will definitely have to do more with the heart than with the mind."

*Martes* is out on Leaf and Static Discos. For details of the Mutek and Sonar festivals, see Out There

# Murcof

ELECTRONICA FOR HEART AND SOUL

BY EDWIN



What, after all, does one make of a two-year-old boy, a child who ultimately comes to be armed with two turntables and a microphone, creating a sonic collage through his instinctive abuse of a stylus and various 45 rpm vinyl recordings — including that of a popular novelty tune sung by 1970s Warner pre-adolescent media sensation Goney Goney? Does the resistant accumulation of scratching sounds, surface noise, and ratiocations of fragmented vocal phrases — offered up in varying, terrible speeds, slow, fast and just about right — constitute a signed release in the age of mechanical reproduction? Is it fair to argue that a precocious Ted, the now and future Thunderboy, anticipated in these excursions of the turnt the everything from the rise of turntablism and hip-hop to the creative strategies of such disparate subterfuges and/or conceptualists as Fatboy Slim, Christine Merzley and that armchair Saviour of Pop (circa 1997), Beck? And if so, then what sort of volatile questions might this pose about the creative appropriation and manipulation of pre-recorded sources, about artistic intent, about the virtues of repetition and about the subversive deployment of consumer electronics in the dark and wild years before Napster? If, to paraphrase the archetypal Polonius's response to an abstract jangling, a two-year-old can do it, does that diminish the accomplishment of the seasoned turntablist who has dedicated years to mastering the wheels of steel and cultivating his staccato language? Or, rather, does it affirm some inherently democratic quality inherent in the very act of scratching and spinning, that a mere toddler could create hypnotic loops and deconstruct pop melodies into perversely humorous after-the-fact commentaries on the star-making machinery?

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—Steve Baker, from the liner notes

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ENGINE OF INDUSTRY  
BY BYRON COLEY

Kjetil Brøndstøl (left) with Jan Christian Kyvik and Mika Erga of Noxagt.

Traditionally, Norway has never ranked highly as a musical hot seat. Sure, history has witnessed fine and dandy records by the 70-year-old avant-garde composer Arne Nordheim, Terje Rypdal's near-mythical 70s jazz rockers Min Blå, mid-80s punk garage outfit Basement Brats, Black Metal Improvisors Abruption, and others. But until recently, Norway just didn't seem to have enough interesting contemporary recording artists for anyone to get a real take on its specific aesthetic gravity. Things have begun to change, however, with the emergence of the Apartment label's constellation of avant psychédelic pop, and the experimental, ghost-folk and electronically oriented jinkies congregated around the Rune Grammofon, Smalltown Supersound and Krank labels. And that's even before you get to the autonomous industry that is guitarist Kjetil Brøndstøl.

Brøndstøl was first murmured about in the mid-90s, when he released a series of cassettes and LPs of misdirected guitar flare-drones and crude electronics. They were not really like anything else, although there were certain similarities to some of the squawk then coming from New Zealand outsider movements such as Corpus Hermeticum. These highly obscure releases, with titles such as *Gutter Sculptures* and *Life Didn't Go in Circles*, gained him some recognition, although by the time the world took notice of his early work, Brøndstøl was already through with it. "My musical attention span gradually diminished and I couldn't handle drawn out noodling anymore," he says, in some of the few words he deigns to email from his home in Sandness, south west Norway. "That's when I rediscovers punk rock. Besides, making 'proper' songs seemed like more of a challenge."

When Brøndstøl's first offerings fell into the hands of the kind of people who run small labels, a whole bunch of them sprang into simultaneous action. Britain's Phil Todd issued a single of Brøndstøl playing

with percussionist Jan Christian Kyvik on his Betley Welcomes Careful Drivers label ("Special Pass"), on which he combined feedback tape collages with a punkish lo-fi guitar scramble to winning effect. In the opposite corner of the globe, Auckland's Bruce Russell issued the *Freedom* – *Waaah Waaah* CD on Corpus Hermeticum, compiling tracks from Brøndstøl's first two LPs along with extended action from the same sessions, allowing the world to hear how strangely guitar sounds are when you record that far north. Scott Foust issued the *Rogalands Lydgate* LP on his Swil Radio label, more abstract and chatter than its precedents, achieving an extremely high level of avant bedroom ambience, at times recalling the early work of The Shadow Ring. And finally, Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore issued the solo LP *Kjetil D Brøndstøl* on Ecstacy Peace, which works oddly manhandled turntables into the instrumental mix after a style that simultaneously notes and dismisses certain current trends.

With this group of releases, Brøndstøl's profile was raised among the international underground music network. To accomplish his new goals, Kjetil formed a somewhat interconnected series of combos. There was the Kjetil Del Brondo Group (now known as the Kjetil Del Sparbo Group), a quartet with Sindre Bjerga, Pål Fjelde and percussionist Kyvik. They released a single, a cassette and a couple of LPs – *A Touch Of Sandness* and *Rock Machinery* – which take a more formal, rock oriented approach to noise action. There is also Fibo-Trespo, his duo with DJ/multi-instrumentalist Sindre Bjerga. Rather less 'rock' in their attack, Fibo-Trespo have released a few cassettes, some 7"s, an EP, a CD and an LP that feature extended spurts of sheer improvisation for accordion, guitar, percussion and who knows what else. Lately, they seem to have developed a hankering to play around with electronic instruments, toys and even beats. Then there's University Puns, a mostly acoustic affair that aligns itself with the "psychédelic campfire" wing of the Krautrock army.

These guys have a single and a couple of CD-Rs out. Rumor has it that the next of University Puns come from France, although it's known that one other member is Mickael Tremel, with whom Brøndstøl split an LP on Smalltown Supersound. Brøndstøl's side finds him in an overtly electronic and rhythmic mood.

Which brings us finally to the heavy electronic presence of Noxagt, who have evolved into Brøndstøl's primary working unit. "Although," Brøndstøl cautions, "we've never had a fixed model for Noxagt. The band has changed dramatically throughout the past six months. Interestingly enough, Noxagt is now straying from 'punk' – although I never really thought of Noxagt as punk – and becoming more plastic." They have released a cassette, a CD full of weird loops, and some 7" EPs that cram insane numbers of short, shattered tunes into unimaginably tight places. The song titles are great – "United & Qui," "Heavy Vortex" – and some of the songs are quite exciting, but they fly by so fast that my brain hurts. Brøndstøl just says they're "the epitome of the Nor Wave sound".

Questioned about the regional ramifications of this remark – Nor Wave is also the name of his new label – Brøndstøl was noncommittal. "I'm not interested in Norwegian artists as such, but I do want to promote good local bands who don't get proper recognition from labels, clubs, etcetera. I think, in general, Norwegian bands and artists should take more risks and perhaps discard whatever is considered the flavour of the month."

Regarding future plans, Brøndstøl says, "at the moment I'm just in Noxagt and Hellfire [an as yet unrecorded Metal group], although we might do some more Fibo-Trespo recordings soon. I play bass in both those bands, but I'd also like to play drums in a Grindcore band, and I'd be interested in doing soundtracks. That's all I can think of at the moment." Yeah, us too. ☐ Contact: noxagt@hotmail.com

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SILENCE IS A RHYTHM TOO

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

# The Sealed Knot



Male banding (left to right): The Sealed Knot's Rhodi Davies, Burkhard Beins and Mark Wastell

Presented with an object, any object, it's a fair bet that a member of The Sealed Knot would rub it rather than hit it. "For a long time since the 1960s, it felt rebellious and avant-gardistic to be loud and harsh in one way or another, but now mainstream culture is loud and in your face," states Burkhard Beins, the Berlin-based percussionist of an improvising trio whose fluent, tightly woven performances are anything but full on. Beins is talking by email about the quietness and space that have been "in the air," in his words, since the mid-90s. While The Sealed Knot's music is related to the "small gestures" work of European improvisors such as Radu Malfatti and Axel Dörner, it has also evolved in the context of the pangloic lowcase scene and the sonic downshifts of Japanese musicians such as Taki Sugimoto, Toshimaru Nakamura and Sachiko M.

"Most of my material is breathy, white noise bowing, predominantly of the body of the instrument, but always with a tactile, textural approach," says the trio's London-based cellist Mark Wastell, when I meet him and harpist Rhodi Davies in a cafe down the road from Wastell's North London record shop Sound323. "Most of what I play happens to be quieter because of the nature of the instrument and the way I want to present it," he continues. "But I think a lot of what's different about The Sealed Knot's music has to do with the pace of the music—the pulse. It's about a much slower paced unfolding of ideas, which some people have called a 'turbulence of the MM aesthetic.'"

"Part of what we do with The Sealed Knot is post-industrial," adds Davies, opening another frame of reference. "We sometimes get into areas that are very loud. I see it not so much as silence as exploring the whole dynamic range of your instrument.

From a whisper to the loudest noise you can make. A lot of that area hasn't been discovered or explored—it's uncharted territory."

Featuring two performances of eerie pose, their new Meniscus album bears out this claim. On the first, recorded in London's All Angels church, delicate sound events hang and dissolve in the air; on the second, made in Huddersfield, the trio tuck abrasive passages into the folds of their music. Overall, they give the impression of a gradual ebb and flow of layered soundfields over a bedrock of silence. Confronted with the trio's intricately played tones, sometime it's hard to tell the provenance of a particular sound—like many musicians exploring extended techniques, they're at war with their instruments.

"For years I've been trying to get away from Romantic ideas of the hero and strip it down," says Davies. "We're all trying to find sounds that are there on our instruments but haven't been discovered yet. You imagine a sound and try to find it."

"I almost detect the sound of the cello," adds Wastell. "My sound comes from an anti-cello perspective. The sounds that I want to produce are often sounds that have caught my attention outside the instrument, whether it be the wind in the trees or a high-pitched sinewave from Sachiko M."

Both still in their early thirties, Davies and Wastell met through bassist and composer Simon Fall in 1995. They played with him in IST for several years, and they also play together as the Broken Consort duo, as well as outfits such as Assumed Possibilities (with Phil Durrant and Chris Burn), and Chris Burn's Ensemble (with Burn, Durrant, John Butcher, John Russell and Matt Hutchinson). Both Davies and Wastell were initially drawn to free jazz and Improv, though other influences began to shift the direction of their

work. Lachenmann and Feldman impacted on Wastell, Cage and Tudor's electronic output did it for Davies.

Beins came to Improv via a noisier aesthetic dating from his 1980s tape experiments. This industrial background is still evident in Perlonex, the trio he shares with Ignaz Schick on electronics and Jörg Mans Zeger on electric guitar. Davies and Wastell first heard Beins play in 1995. Soon after a dialogue was initiated between the London musicians and a generation of young Berlin players strongly influenced by British Improv, among them Beins, Andrea Neumann, Annette Krebs and Michael Renkel. The Sealed Knot went legit as a group two years ago with the release of their first CD on Confront. The trio have since toured in Germany and England.

Gradual shifts and the kind of communication that develops within longstanding musical relationships are central to the group aesthetic. The slow, deliberate movement of The Sealed Knot's music often sounds semi-composed, a testament to the close bond that they have developed over the years. Though they have evolved a particular way of playing together, none of the members of the trio is happy to see it tagged "the new silence" or "new Berlin reductionism".

"I think there is a lot of misunderstanding about the so-called 'reductionism,'" contests Beins. "Yes, the concentration on quiet sonic material did open up a rich and detailed microscopic spectrum within a low dynamic range. I think it was very important to go through that process of clarification. But now I feel it's opening up again. The ideal would be to be capable of the full range of sonic possibilities with just the same kind of focused intensity and concentration." □ Surface/Plane is out this month on Meniscus. Sound323 website: [www.sound323.com](http://www.sound323.com)

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A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: In East Africa, John Fenn finds Malawi's rap clans scratching a living from bare essentials



Raising awareness (left to right): Malawi rap crew Ghast Face Clan, record producer Goodson Gomanda, local radio DJ Dr Gwiz

We're perched on a boulder on Soche Hill, overlooking Blantyre, the cultural capital of Malawi, a strip of a nation wedged between Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. This is the place where local HipHop crew COB Connection work out their rhymes over human beatbox rhythms and drum accompaniments. COB is short for their home turf Chilobwe, a 'high density' (meaning poor) neighbourhood nestled in the ring of hills surrounding Blantyre. Each member of the Connection maintains a strong sense of geosocial pride for the ghetto. These people, who love, sing and live rap and reggae, consciously model their group on the mosaic organisation of their heroes, The Wu-Tang Clan. Fluctuating around 12 members, COB's ranks divide up into smaller groups that regularly perform together. Today The Ghost Face Clan is the dominant presence: Meek IB, Red Gun, Red Finger, Mad Wuffin and Wu-Tang. Claiming to be both educators and entertainers, The Ghost Face Clan embrace a growing presence of youths in Malawi who embrace HipHop, despite the formidable material hardships that characterise the state of play for artists in developing countries: limited access to resources and music facilities. Lack of money is the main problem, but that doesn't keep COB, and many other aspiring HipHop supporters, from playing the game.

Before 1994, Malawi was a one party state run by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who had appointed himself president for life. With eroded political control seeping into cultural dictatorship, Malawians felt all too safe expressing themselves through art, dress and speech after Banda was swept out of power in the first multiparty elections in 1994. Music was at the forefront of the new artistic freedoms, and performers like Lucius 'The Soldier' Banda (no relation to the former president) spoke out against the previous regime. The Soldier wove his messages into reggae rhythms developed alongside his brother Paul at their studio in Balaka. Not coincidentally, Malawian reggae became known as Balaka Sounds, and the music still dominates the airwaves and cassette stalls. Local pop music consists of Congolese inspired rumba, known locally as kwazakwasa, or gospel tunes sung over electronic rhythms. The musical landscape is filled out by masses of

foreign music such as soul, rap and Country, and a smattering of traditional acoustic guitar based tunes featuring lyrics drawn from proverbs and village wisdoms. Heard in beer halls and on Radio 1 FM, this traditional music might sell few cassettes, but it maintains a firm grasp on the public consciousness. Folk music heroes like Daniel Kachamba and Alan Namoko (both deceased) are household names, and seemingly everyone knows the words to a few traditional songs. Only a handful could name a Malawian rap song, however, and no one could quote you its rhymes.

With no share in today's marketplace, Malawian HipHop functions more as a musical space for the likes of COB to flex their heads and cultural identities among peers. But even as radio DJs and studio owners agree that local rap has little commercial appeal right now, they believe it has potential. Explanations for its low commercial prospects illustrate a catch-22 situation: no one will buy locally produced rap because it doesn't measure up to the American originals, meaning Malawian performers can't get the resources to compete. Their condition reflects the nation's dire economic status: disenfranchised in the widest sense of the word, musicians are forced to rely on meagre patrons for instruments and regular gigs, while struggling to stay afloat in a scene marred by backstabbing, accusations of theft, deceit and countless other offences. It's even tougher for rap and reggae fans, most of whom are still in school and rarely have regular jobs. With studio time usually beyond their means, when they do get through the door it is most likely to record a single. Literally: most can afford to lay down just one track and then buy a solitary copy of it. Goodson Gomanda, owner of GHE Studios and an active supporter of youth music, explains that most rap artists record for their own ears only. Distribution doesn't extend beyond a few friends, and radio plays are rare. But Dr Gwiz, at Blantyre's Power 101 FM, is hoping to change things by encouraging listeners to bring him songs to play on his weekly Hip Hop Connection show. Before he was a DJ, Gwiz had his own radio hit back in 1996 with a Chichewa language rap tune about AIDS, so he has some idea what it takes to get on air.

Yet lack of a commercial outlet doesn't entirely stop young Malawians from getting their music heard. Performers like COB ply their verses at rap and reggae competitions held every so often in major urban centres like Blantyre or Lilongwe. Singing to pre-recorded backing tracks – instrumentals often nicked from the radio or dubbed from pirate US rap cassettes – contestants compete for small cash prizes and a lot of pride. Non-governmental organisations dedicated to youth issues usually provide the venues and variable PA systems for the contests, which often involve between 20 and 30 performers, each trailing a legion of fans, mostly from the 'hood. Not only have these contests become significant social events, they are also a small yet important base for Malawi's rappers to develop their skills. At a contest in Chimbali's Nite Club in nearby Zangwanga, The Ghost Face Clan came first with rhymes warning women about AIDS, tossed over the warily bested of a multi-generation copy of the Mission impossible 2 theme. Unaware of its provenance, they rocked it hard and brought the house down.

These competitions are the reason why COB regularly hold their Soche Hill practise sessions. They treat the events themselves as entertainment/education opportunities to disseminate messages about HIV/AIDS, corruption and poverty, among other social issues. Rather than simply complaining about poverty or lamenting the growing number of funerals – common themes in reggae and traditional songs – COB identify the source of a problem and challenge their audience to take charge of their own lives. They may dismiss traditional music as 'singing to the dead' but, along with the rest of their generation, COB still feel the need to touch base with it. Pride in their cultural and historical past is just as important as going up in the latest baggy clothes and cutting other MCs down to size. Meek IB often tosses the former name of Malawi, Nyasaland, into his verses, while other members incorporate Chewa proverbs. In the process, they reject the bleak predictions of global agencies like the UN or the World Bank, while questioning the future peddled by corrupt politicians across the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots. COB sing for the living, not the dead. □





# Invisible Jukebox

Every month we play a musician or group a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



## Super\_Collider

Tested by Peter Shapiro. Photo by Mattias Ek

After a childhood spent on the run from Pinochet's Chile, an adolescence in the Midlands spent hacking and raving, and a stint at Brighton cheerfully misusing the principles of academic electronic music, Cristian Vogel pledged his love to Techno and released the *Infra* EP for Dave Clarke's Magnetic North label in 1993. A further series of militant and spartan EPs on Magnetic North, Ferrox and his own Mosquito label got him noticed in Germany where he hooked up with the Force Inc. Mille Plateaux and Tresor labels, for whom he released a number of albums (including *Beginning To Understand*, *Specific Momentific*, *Body Mapping* and *Busca Invisibles*). In 1999 he signed to Novamute and released the *Rescate* 137 album. In the meantime, Vogel co-founded a management company, No Future, which looks after his own projects as well as those of fellow travellers Si Begg and Neil Landstrumm. In 1997, Vogel called himself DJ Decay and contributed to the hydra-headed group Trash that released the *Industrial samplecoregouchbeat* album of 'weirdstep'/'punk jazz' 'whatchamacallit' on Mille Plateaux. Trash also included Jamie Lidell, a fellow Brightonian who beatboxed, sang and programmed his way through a series of 12's for labels like Mosquito and Sativae, and album, *Muddin' Gear*, for Spymania/Warp. In 1998 Vogel and Lidell morphed into Super Collider. Despite taking their name from a music software program, their debut album, *Head On*, was a mutant combination of distorted Techno and straight up electro funk that felt live rather than cooked up in the bowels of an over-taxed Powerbook. Super Collider have just released their second album, *Raw Digits*, for their own Rise Robots Rise label.

## X-101

## "SONIC DESTROYER"

FROM "SONIC DESTROYER 12" (UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE) 1991

CV: I do know it. There are so many stabs I have to go through in my head.

JL: Stab awakes.

CV: I was raving a bit later than this, when it was all being resampled and sampled again.

**This came out in 93, I think.**

CV: Yeah. This has got to be American because it hasn't got any breakbeats. It's Underground Resistance. Is it? It's "Death Star". No?

**It's "Sonic Destroyer".**

CV: US rush, No, UR are cool. That's when the British scene flattened all the breakbeats in and went mentalist for ages. The UR rave rush is, I'm sure, quintessentially different from the British one, but unless you were in the States and went to [UR ringleader Mad] Mike's parties, it's hard for us to know what it felt like. That's when raving was really cool and everything was mixed together: American, British, European. There were lots of cool British DJs. Grooverider, obviously, he was a massive one for playing Techno, which is weird when you think about it now.

JL: It started pretty late for me. I was in little counties in England, I had a few little raves, but I wasn't exactly a rave veteran until I met the Groove guys...

CV: But you were raving like a trooper.

JL: By then I was raving like a trooper. If you really wanted to get it started, you always put on a UR punisher.

CV: I heard a lot of this music through tapes. My vinyl collection was tiny because I was up in the Midlands, and there was like one shop which maybe got some Italian stuff, but would never get stuff like UR. I'd hear it from Eclipse in Coventry and all these tapes that me and my mates would listen to, so I'm a bit vague with the originals because at the end of the day it's just some MC yelling over some stabs. And that was formative for me [laughs].

**Do you still have that frenetic devotion to Techno you were talking about a few years ago?**

CV: Yeah, totally. Obviously, I have a huge Techno collection and it's maturing slowly and becoming really good. I had to filter a lot of crap out, but you never really know what's going to come back and sound cool again. I moved to Spain and couldn't take everything, so I had to leave 1000 records here, which was quite difficult. I felt this huge sort of organic feeling about my collection... Techno is my favourite music to hear loud when I'm out in those dark rooms with strobe lighting [laughs]. Techno's still the best for me, just the full frequency groove.

## PRINCE

## "HEAD"

FROM DIRTY MIND (WARRNER BROS) 1990

JL: [Immediately] Minneapolis. Prince, is it "Partyup"? No, same album though. It's "Head".

CV: This album still sounds great. My sister had all this stuff, so I never had them. It's like all these Techno records that I never bought. I have this philosophy that if I bought them, they'd get boring. I've got to thank my sister for the Minneapolis connection.

CV: She sounds like the funkiest...

JL: She was odd, yeah. I remember once she painted her room black and she used to listen to Prince. I don't know what I was into at the time.

CV: Vaughan Williams.

JL: I didn't even have a record player or anything. My sister had the hi-fi, an Alba MIDI hi-fi, with the lowest grade speaker wire that was barely visible. She used

to play all this stuff, and I'd tell her to turn it down. We'd get into a fight and she would hit me with a box and stuff. And then Mum would step in. Yeah, Prince would always start the arguments.

**When did Super Collider's Prince-style 'dirty glamour meeting Techno' aesthetic come from?**

JL: Maybe it's the Minneapolis brass. They could never afford a brass section, so they always did it on synthesizer.

CV: Fat synths. Stabs. Mono synths. In the late 70s there were those synth lines that tried to be electric guitar lines. They definitely explored electronic sound. Drum machines.

JL: He was a bit of a bedroom boy, in a way. He was a real solo geezer. I remember trying to do "Dorothy Parker" (from Sign "O" The Times) on the drum machine when I first heard it, and thought, "I can't do that. How has he done it?" The idea of being able to hold it down with a drum machine and a couple of synths and just putting a voice over it.

CV: He did ballads and other stuff, but he could do a really good straight 4/4 track, with real power and controlled energy. Big snare drums too. He never really did massive bass drums, but big snare drums and claps with snares.

JL: We never got out to do anything like that, but you can't shake off your smell. And that smell is Prince for me, I guess.

## KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN

## STUDIE I

FROM ELEKTRONISCHE MUSIK 1952/1960 (STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG) 1985

CV: It's very early, very primitive.

**This is from 1953.**

CV: Tones.

JL: Yeah, this guy had a tone generator.

CV: I thought about Morton Subotnick when it first came on, but that's much later. Is it pioneering? Is it well pioneering?

**Yeah, but it's not one of his more celebrated things.**

JL: Is it concrete school? No. Is it Karl?

CV: It is Karl.

CV: It seemed a bit chilled for Stockhausen though. The editors weren't particularly 'whoop, bang'.

**It's Studie I.**

CV: I have heard that. I did I hear that when I was doing my course at college. Telemusik is my favourite because it's got all that stuff that we're really into. He's exploring the transitions and things like that, structural gear.

**Why is that stuff interesting to you?**

CV: Well, I was studying him at college. I was doing 20th century music, even though it's pretty hard to do an entire century in a couple of terms. A lot of the music was really hardcore to listen to and analyse, just because it's difficult aesthetically. Trying to study it was really difficult, especially with all the people around me in my cheap flat listening to drum 'n' bass. I think structurally, the ideas made a lot of sense to me. It was really clear, it didn't seem that far out. Especially in Telemusik, where he'd mark out the sections with a big nose, for example. It's really loud and clear. The work ethic moved as well. We were talking about Steve Reich yesterday. Jamie had just listened to it's Gone Again.

JL: Yeah, I hadn't heard that for ages. I had sort of written him off in my mind as a bit poppy, but just hearing something like that, a man with a tone generator and a couple of tape machines, wew. I've just bought a load of old tape machines, but the work involved... Yet once you can build up loads of tapes, the sound is much more malleable. The varispeed on the computer is a horrible process because the sound

## Invisible Jukebox

turns into real mush. These Belgian guys came over to my studio and I had just been messing around recording loads of sounds, slowed down the tape so it was just barely moving on the tape machine. The silliness of sound at that speed is just awesome. You can't get it on a computer.

**CV:** At the start, I thought this might be *Dval* or something—that resonant filter bank kind of sound. **JL:** I just bought this crazy old filter, I think what Stockhausen used to use, analysis filters. It's a big old thing, big barrel filter with a massive dial in the middle. Again, it's one of those things where people look at it and go, "Why would I want something so big in my studio? What does it do? It's just a filter..." What happened to people? What happened to synth manufacturers? What happened to Roland? What are they trying to do now? It's really disturbing. There doesn't seem to be any love of sound. People who work with computers should be locked in my sister's black room with a tape machine and a couple of D90 cassettes. The way tape inspires you to push the pause button, and you think, "I can stop the tape and put something completely different on, I can change the mood." Now in the computer age it's all too easy. Some of the manual labour is there to return, if people want to get that some integrity back.

### SLY & THE FAMILY STONE "YOU CAUGHT ME SMILIN"

FROM *THEY'RE A HOT GUY* (DUNES) 1971

**JL:** [Immediately] Sly. [Hums along] When I first started to get into Sly, I used to get annoyed at him because he was wasted on every track. That track is really great and then he goes [imitates Sly's scream]. The song's really cool, there's this really lovely, sunny mood, and then he just screams, going, "I'm taking over now. This is my song." There are a few other songs like that, like "Skin I'm In" [from *Fresh*], where the arrangement comes through. It kind of tainted it for me. Whenever I go on stage these days I'm always really straight. I won't have a drink, I won't do anything. And these guys were absolutely fucked. I can't imagine going on stage on acid. I often think maybe it would really help. Mind you, everything I've ever done on cocaine has always been the weakest piece of shit ever. It seemed to work for a few people. Some people get really creative on cocaine. A lot of the things I really love, like this album, I'll never get bored of it. It is the album for me.

**CV:** We tried to get Sly Stone to remix us at one point. The record company was like, "What would you like to remix you? Go on anybody, anybody."

**That singing, that revved, back of the throat thing is obviously reminiscent of some of your stuff.**

**JL:** Yeah. You know my history now. My sister, Prince. But it's good to start with Prince, because then you realise who he ripped off and just how much he ripped him off. I bought *Fresh* as a complete accident. I was in Cambridge in a record shop and my mum was like, "Come on, let's go." And I was like, "All right, I'll just buy this, this looks pretty good." And I got it home, and I was like, "This is it. What's going on?"

**CV:** The rhythm section in the band are just having it. There are always no cheap sounds. That wooden cabinet sound that we've been looking for for a long time. The sound of wood.

**What attracted you to that kind of singing?**

**JL:** *Fresh* was the first Sly that I heard and it was "Skin I'm In" that I really loved. Obviously, I had heard Steve Wonder before that, but Sly is more in the background. He took that kind of singing further, he just spit it out. The soul is there, it's in your face. He brings it directly to you. I love the gravelly bass [imitates him], the way he holds the note and then spits it out.

**CV:** What's the first track on *Fresh*?

**JL:** "In Time".

**CV:** Yeah, that's the first false idea I ever heard. Hey look at that, they brought the master volume right down and pushed it back up again. And somebody let that go all the way to the production stage. Another important connection between Sly and us is the lyrical forms, and that also pushed him into the background a lot, because he was getting really Dada and inventing words. Not just saying them once and being kind of Beefheartly. He was making things out of the way a word sounded, and if a word wasn't good enough rhythmically, he'd invent a new one, stick it in there and let everyone else try to work it out. If it felt good for him to sing... Jamie definitely does a lot of that. When we were working out the lyrics, he'd be like, "Oh, I just can't sing that word. Let's get a new one." And if nothing fits in, then we'll just make a sonic word.

### KRAFTWERK "HARMONIKA"

FROM *KRAFTWERK 2* (PHILIPS) 1972

**JL:** Melodica.

**CV:** Not a lot of those hippies, is it?

**CV:** Not-hippy. You were very close with the melodic. It's Kraftwerk, "Harmonika" from their second album. [Laughs]

**JL:** Oh, I hadn't heard that one.

**CV:** I have, but I was thinking all sorts of other stuff. My brain was going mad. I thought for Cutler was going to come in and read a poem, but then he didn't. I thought it was Terry Riley for a minute, but then, of course, Kraftwerk.

**JL:** The guy I share the studio with in Berlin has this real organ and it makes it easy for you if you haven't got any breath. It's got like a bellows that you can just hold down and the whole instrument shakes. He introduced me to the clavinet when we were trying to do a Super-Collider track in Berlin. What I didn't realise about those things was that when you play the low notes, your fingers start to shake. That's the thing about these things, again, that people miss.

**CV:** What happens in the rest of the song?

**It's the same, basically.**

**JL:** They passed the back from Dresden and it's them passed on the train. It's them just passing a melodic around...

**CV:** Yeah, watching Ralf try to work it out.

### OVAL

**"TRACK 2"**

FROM *OMALPUS 2* (THRIFF LOCKER) 2000

**CV:** [Immediately] *Dval*, or Oval as they're known in England.

**I know you used to be into generative music.**

**CV:** I've always been essentially lazy and that's still a drive. I've always liked stuff that would do a lot of work for me. Essentially, *Dval* hit on a really cool idea, to do something that was easily identifiable but very easy to make. After that you'd spend a lot of time and effort thinking about why and the theory behind it. It's weird, I wasn't really following art electronic things at that time, but I guess the music I was making was reaching out to people like Markus Popp. He sent me a bunch of theory packages to my student house in Brighton containing strange tapes with all that music on them. Where it was coming from or who or why? It ended being that they were really inspired by the B side of my first release on Magnetic North, which is totally bizarre when you think about it. It turned them on and they respected it enough to make them want to send me their music, to be one of the first people in the world to give some response to it.

**Why do you think your music appealed to them?**

**CV:** That will always remain an enigma to me. It's a mystery I will always treasure, just because of the randomness of it. What I learned was that you can never predict what's going to happen to your music when you put it out there, or who it's going to inspire or affect.

**JL:** No, it's because you're into a massive range of sonic textures and you're not afraid to put them into a different context.

**CV:** Put them on the B side of a very hard Techno record [laughs]. When they told me that, I listened to it, and I was like, "It beats me. Can't see the connection".

**JL:** Maybe they had a weird copy of it or it got all mashed up.

**CV:** Possibly because it was on red vinyl, which is really funky...

**JL:** Now that would be a cool story... [Adopts German accent] Markus, I dropped this record into a pile of cigarette ash. Oh no, not my favourite Techno record. Hey, wait a minute...

**CV:** We're not really process musicians, not on the final stage. When we perform or DJ, we're definitely not. But where we do use such ideas are at the products stage of our sound design, where we'll explore this sound source or do this with that record or something.

### NON

**"PAGAN MUZAK"**  
FROM *GRAY SEAT 3* (LP) 1999

**CV:** Gristle?

**Similar.**

**JL:** There's a hit in there somewhere.

**It's Boyd Rice, aka Non.**

**CV:** Oh, I was going to say Boyd Rice, but I couldn't remember his name. I have an album that sounds exactly like this. It's black and it's on Mute. I can't really listen to it. I don't think it's opening my doors. **JL:** Nowadays you don't have to commit that stuff to vinyl.

**Well, essentially you do because that's a lock groove.**

**JL:** I've never been a fan of the lock groove record. I got a chance to get my first chocolate record in Berlin. Then this one guy put in the east lovingly creating these things, and they're absolutely awesome. You should definitely get it. You just give the guy a 7" and he uses this hidden machinery to press your own chocolate version.

**CV:** We are into vinyl on lots of levels. We're into the idea because it's analogue, because it's a physical representation of sound...

**JL:** You can do a lot of really cool things with vinyl. You can shout really close to the head and it comes out faintly on the vinyl.

**CV:** Actually, the word "Industrial" has come up a few times with some journalists. Which is weird because we're not into EDM, industrial or anything like that. It's not represented in our collections at all.

**JL:** I'd like to get more Throbbing Gristle.

**CV:** Yeah, now that it's been mentioned in the context of our music, I'd like to check it out. Do you hear industrial aspects to our music?

**Not necessarily in Super-Collider, but any minimal, pounding Techno is going to have some similarities.**

**CV:** What about Suicide? Dr. Fun sound was compared to them because it was really simple: drum machine, processing and vocals, which is effectively what they were doing.

**JL:** I really like it when people make links...

**CV:** Yeah, the more far out the better because that's really bloody interesting. We never really got offended if someone says, "You sound like Jan Hammer." □ Raw Digits is out now on Rise Robots Rise

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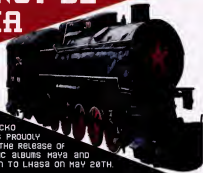
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In scarcely more than the blink of an eye, drummer Susie Ibarra has become one of the most prominent figures on New York's avant jazz scene. She has worked with a staggering number of downtown denizens, including William Parker, Butch Morris, John Zorn, Thurston Moore and Zeena Parkins, and has won a clutch of honours from various local and national magazines. In addition to her own groups' numerous releases, over the past few years she has also recorded a collection of duets with free guitar master Derek Bailey called *Daedalus* and a dance performance with The Dave Douglas Ensemble, *El Trilogy*, as well as adding percussion to avant rockers Yo La Tengo's *And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out* album and single, "Saturday".

It's easy to see why Ibarra, still only in her early thirties, is in such demand these days. Her sensitive, expressive drumming moulds itself perfectly to whatever context she happens to be playing in. Equally at home in free improv, modern composition and Philippine gong music, her mercurial style is nonetheless easily recognisable. Her stickwork is forceful enough to carry the blazing power of The Dave S Ware Quartet, but she can just as easily switch over to soft mallets, handbells and rattles for the more delicate, near classical passages she composes for her trio.

Born in Anaheim, California, and raised in Houston, Texas, Ibarra embarked on a drumming career relatively late in life. Her taste for jazz blossomed even later. However, coaxed early on by her mother, she began studying piano at a very young age, along with her four older siblings. "I started playing classical when I was four," Ibarra recalls. "I played it all through grade school up through high school, when I was 14. My mother's not a musician, but she's always loved music, and she's the one who had us all learn piano... [My father] played piano by ear. He grew up in the Philippines during World War II, so he learned with his sisters off the radio. He'll usually play just for himself, but if he really feels animated and a lot of the family's home, we might all play together... My parents liked Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Doris Day, Frank Sinatra. And they had some Count Basie. Then, of course, there was pop and rock from my siblings, my brother and sisters' records. I don't think I bought a record until I was 13," she says with a mischievous laugh.

The dramatic flair Ibarra evinces today in her playing and composing may have been shaped in part by her early exposure to opera – again thanks to her opera-enthusiast mother. "When I was little we would take turns going to see opera," she recalls, "so as a kid I got to see these incredible productions. Since I was young I didn't always have the patience, but it eventually grew on me." So much so that she is currently working on a score for a contemporary opera, *Shangri-La*, with a libretto by poet Yusef Komunyakaa.

Although both of Ibarra's parents grew up in the Philippines, and she herself would later embark on extensive studies of Asian percussion and gamelan, she didn't hear very much traditional music played at home while she was growing up. "We had some gong music records in my family's house and my cousins' house. We had Kulintang gong. But no one played them," she remembers, mock-promising to bring them

back with her next time she sees her cousins. The family did occasionally have more traditional gatherings where they listened to Spanish-infused stung music, much of it played on the banduna, a 14-string Philippine instrument related to the lute and guitar. "It was like guitar music – classical, folk," she says. "But you know," she hastens to add, "Filipinos also love cheesy karaoke."

For all the various musics she was exposed to at home, not to mention her later avant-garde studies, Ibarra's listening as a teenager wasn't much different from that of most other American kids in the mid-80s. "When I was in junior high school, I was a big Michael Jackson fan," she confesses. "The first record I bought was *Off the Wall*. I used to be into dancing and breakdancing and all that stuff. I was also into U2." Ibarra was first inspired to try her hand at drumming around this time. "I saw a local band playing in an outdoor park where we lived, and the drummer looked like he was having so much fun. And I thought, 'I want to do that!' I talked to my parents, and my mother said, 'OK, I'll make a deal with you, we'll split the cost of the kit.' So I bought this really cheap kit... She bursts into laughter just thinking about the set now, and begs me not to print the brand name that she's accidentally blurted out. "You couldn't even tune them – you just clipped the skins off! It was hilarious." A mere ten days after she bought the kit she was invited to join a local hardcore punk group. "It was really intense music," she recalls. "I had absolutely no technique – I would get blisters. But all of a sudden I was *gigging*. And it was just fun to play."

In the meantime Ibarra continued with her piano studies, as well as somewhat incongruously playing piano and organ for church choirs. "It was funny because I'd play these punk concerts and then the next day I'd play in church," she laughs. "It was really two different worlds. My parents were OK. They just didn't really like me to play with the punk band on school nights. But once in a while I'd get away with it."

Interested in art as a child, Ibarra went on to study drawing and painting at the Glassell School of Art in Houston and Otis Parsons Art Institute in Los Angeles. When she came to New York to attend Sarah Lawrence College on an art scholarship in the late 80s, music was still a fairly casual hobby, albeit one she wasn't willing to give up. "It was just something I loved to do, so I brought my drums up," she says. "I couldn't practise in my room, so I'd go to the science department nearby and practise there." Shortly after arriving, she went to her first concert in New York, which, fatefully, was a Sun Ra Aksestra gig. "I'd only heard them on that Disney album [the Hal Wilner-produced Disney tribute *Stay Awake*]," she recalls. "They had come to play in Houston when I was in high school and I'd missed them." Evidently she wasn't about to make the same mistake in New York, and she dragged three girlfriends from college along with her. "They didn't know anything about Sun Ra, and I said, 'You gotta come! You gotta come!' And it was an amazing set. I was just totally blown away. This was in 1988. They were in full bloom, with saxophonist John Gilmore. Ibarra was so moved by the show that she approached Aksestra drummer Buster Smith afterward. She was soon taking lessons from him. Smith encouraged her to extensively broaden her listening, and taught her to transcribe drum solos from Horace Silver records.

Inevitably, Ibarra dropped her art studies to focus on drumming full time. In the mid-90s, she was taking some academic music courses; she also started studying and playing gamelan and Kulintang gong music for the first time. "Those were my first gigs in New York," she recalls. "We played all around: Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum, various World Music

events." In addition, she was studying drums with former Ahmad Jamal sideman Vernel Fournier and Mifford Graves, famously a prime mover in the 60s New Thing and now a renowned music therapist. "Graves played a lot of hand drums," Ibarra says. "Djembe, tablas, congas – he was actually started playing in a Latin band before he ever played drumset. So he has a whole approach of bringing the drums back to the drum kit. I learned a lot from him about applying hand drum technique, like muffing the drums, and applying certain rhythms like turmbao [a mimbó rhythm without rests] to the kit."

In 1993 Ibarra began playing and recording with bassist William Parker, most notably in his formidable band The Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra, a raucous 28-piece ensemble that included Greg Bendan, Jason Hwang, Rob Brown and Ibarra's then husband, tenor saxophonist Assif Tishbir. Ibarra worked with Parker through 1998, during which time she got to meet and work with dozens of artists in the burgeoning downtown avant-garde scene. In 1996 she joined the powerhouse free jazz quartet led by David S. Ware, with whom she would perform and record for the next three years. With her subtle and richly textured drumming maintaining an even keel during the group's often chaotic blowouts, Ibarra began to make a name for herself while playing out with Ware.

After working with Parker, Ibarra and Tishbir founded Hopscotch Records, whose first release, *Home Cookin'*, was a collection of duets by the husband and wife team. Flipping a series of "dream songs" – brief, loosely constructed, hypnotic tunes performed on toys and exotic percussion – through the album's more "traditional" free jazz, Ibarra gave a first hint of the more unorthodox elements she would be adding to the mix in the future. Hopscotch's second release was the stunning *Radiance*, Ibarra's first outing as sole composer and leader. Joined by Cooper-Moore on piano and harp and Charles Burnham on violin, she was now moving even further afield. Its title track is a languorous and gorgeous composition in three movements that wouldn't be out of place in a Manilla drawing room. Led by Burnham's woody violin and Ibarra's cool-headed metalwork, the disc exudes a Zen-like placidity, with judicious use of space and "air." Refreshingly, considering that it was her first recording as a leader, the music on *Radiance* is true ensemble playing, with noticeably little spotlight-hogging by Ibarra. "I play solo concerts, so it's not like I need to solo," she declares. "Also, I enjoy featuring the other musicians in the ensemble, and I enjoy hearing my pieces interpreted. In live shows I take my solo. But drumset in particular is such a powerful and dynamic instrument that it's important to listen and hear what the music calls for."

In early 2000 she released *Flower After Flower*, recorded with the trio from *Radiance* augmented by Tishbir and Chris Speed on woodwinds, trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and, surprisingly, the accordion of Dead Listening pioneer Pauline Oliveros, whom Ibarra had met during a residency at Mills College a few years earlier. On *Flower After Flower* Ibarra continued to seamlessly blend jazz and modern composition, furthering her minimalist East Asian explorations and focusing on bells, tuned percussion and gong as much as her drum kit. The disc does contain one maximalist moment in "Human Beginnings." Featuring the whole ensemble playing at full force, it is reminiscent of Sun Ra's more "out" excursions into chaotic Heliocentric Worlds. But for the most part on *Flower After Flower* the players work in small, intimate sub-groups. Even further scaled down are the tracks "Fractal 1" through "Fractal 4," contemplative solo pieces spotlighting Ibarra twice, Oliveros and Cooper-Moore. In the gamelan-infused "Fractal 1" and the Kulintang-dominated "The Ancients," *Flower After Flower*

contains Ibarra's most directly gong-inspired work to that point.

Ibarra's most recent releases are *Songbird Suite*, by her trio with pianist Craig Taborn and classical violinist Jennifer Choi, and *Black Narcissus*, by the "collective trio" Mephista, which also includes pianist Sylvie Courvoisier and laptron whiz Ikuo Mori. Both are released in the Tzadik label's recently launched Oracle series, which "celebrates the diversity and creativity of women in experimental music making." According to Ibarra, the music on *Black Narcissus* is 100 percent improvised but, she emphasises, "it's not about soloing. It's about playing together, composition in the moment."

"They are good friends of mine," she continues. "They're great improvisors and great musicians. We've had experience playing improv together a lot, so it's a pleasure and very easy to play."

The music on The Ibarra Trio's *Songbird Suite*, on the other hand, is mostly composed through, but with pockets of improvisation and some sections composed "in the moment" by Ibarra. Explaining this "conducted improv" process, she says, "I'm cueing and conducting them in and out of different parts. It's like composing with improv: you're building a composition by having them play different parts – they have different motifs to play, and I'll bring them in and out with different conduction hand signals." Dramatic and often darkly portentous, the music on *Songbird Suite* goes beyond jazz into modern composition and farther field. The opening cut, "Aul", is a syncretized, Latin-flavoured piece that matches Ibarra's punchy brushwork with Taborn's almost tango-style piano. This unaccustomed talent in Latin rhythms is not so strange when you consider how Ibarra often composes with specific players in mind. "Craig is a very rhythmic player, and he can play polyrhythms," she explains. "He comes from a jazz background, but in college he studied a lot of Cuban and Haitian music." *Songbird Suite* also features a new arrangement of the composition "Flower After Flower". The difference is striking: the remake is more painterly, more classical, which Ibarra attributes to the particular approach and background of Choi and Taborn, who were given the opportunity to stretch out in a conducted improv session.

Following the pattern of *Flower After Flower*, Ibarra scatters stripped-down, meditative textures among the group pieces on *Songbird Suite*. Called, appropriately enough, "Trance No. 1" through "Trance No. 3", the first is Ibarra's gong/gamelan-inspired solo piece played entirely on drum kit. The second, a duet between Ibarra and guest musician Ikuo Mori, is a sound painting of an imaginary rainforest, with soft but insistent tomtom work by Ibarra and unusually organic rattling and droplet sounds from Mori's laptron. The haunting "Trance No. 3" features the full trio plus guest Mon, where Choi's elongated, bowed drones are punctuated by Taborn's intermittent, dissonant piano sculplings. Of Taborn's playing on this track, Ibarra remarks, with a childlike laugh, "Craig is like a kitten. He walks through this door and enters."

Influenced by her background in painting, Ibarra's highly visual approach to music shows not only in her compositions and recordings, but in the way she works with musicians. She'll sometimes give purely visual cues in her conducting, especially to the visually oriented Mon. As a trained musician, Ibarra is aware of the close relationship between music and mathematics, but she's careful not to get overly analytical about her work. "I think the mathematics is more in the subtlety of it," she posits. "I did this workshop in Minneapolis. I got a lot of studio drummers, and they were asking all these technical questions. I answered them for a while, and then I said, 'There's a time when you have to take that, and you have to put it aside and play some music.' □ *Songbird Suite* and *Black Narcissus* are out on Tzadik





WORDS CHRISTOPH COCK  
PHOTOS STEVE RUDER

INSPIRED BY ZEN BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE CONCEPT OF WABI-SABI, THE SILENCES OF BERNHARD GÜNTHER PICK UP WHERE MORTON FELDMAN AND MARK ROTHKO LEFT OFF. CELEBRATING EMPTINESS, TRANSCIENCE AND NATURAL DECAY

# No hands clapping



"It is the stillest words that bring on the storm.  
Thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world" –  
Friedrich Nietzsche

**Barely audible,** nearly absorbed into the Ambient din: a thin electrical whine. Staccato crackles peck down like swarms of neutrons, or raindrops on an electronic lake. Jittery bell tones sporadically pierce the surface, sending out Doppler nappies, billowing throbs that trail off into the distance. Now and then, patches of white noise wash across the auditory field as if blown by some alien wind.

It's been a decade since Bernhard Günter unveiled this spare and mysterious soundworld on his debut, *un peu de neige sale* (Selektion/Table Of The Elements). As striking in its sonic substance as in its extreme understatement, his abstract electronics provoked wildly disparate reactions. For more than a few, its near-imperceptibility strained not only the limits of hearing but the limits of tolerance as well. Yet the record also drew unexpected acclaim and set off a quiet revolution. Günter soon found himself at the centre of an international "scene" of experimentalists – among them Achim Wolschke, Marc Behrens, John Hudak, John Duncan, Ryoji Ikeda and Francisco López – dedicated to investigating the extremes of auditory perception and the very matter of sound.

Ten years on, Günter's influence is evident all over the musical map, from Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M's spiky filaments and Richard Chartier's peppered surfaces, to Pole's crackling dub, alive noise's pixelated funk and the micro-improv of Rada Meliath, Impeigun and Reinhold Friedl. Recent compilations such as *lowcase sound* (Brennstoff), *Microscopic Sound* (Capricorn) and *zaff* (12k) have paid tribute – explicit or not – to Günter's quiet genius. Meanwhile, record labels specialising in sonic microscopy have sprung up in every corner of the world.

Despite his influence and his ready encouragement and support of younger musicians, Günter himself has remained an enigmatic figure. He rarely tours or performs live, preferring to stay in Koblenz, the Rhine Valley city where he has lived for much of his life. From his home studio, he has released a steady stream of CDs – six in the past 18 months alone – the bulk of them on his own *trente orealeu* label. He has just completed two extraordinary double CD sets for the Brooklyn-based LINE label that both recall his debut and chart his progress over the past ten years.

Günter was born 45 years ago in the working class town of Neuwied, 40 kilometres upriver from Koblenz. As a teenager in the early 70s, he played drums, flute and sax in rock and jazz groups, and dabbled in experimental improvisation, thanks to a teacher with a fondness for John Cage. At 18, he took up the electric guitar and gave up rock for free jazz and *avant garde* composition. "I still play my guitar almost every day," Günter notes, "it's a more tactile experience than a trackball." In 1980, he followed a girlfriend to Paris, where he began a crash course in modern music. "I went to the IRCAM very often," he recalls, "and also followed Pierre Boulez's lectures, the analysis class, and computer aided composition workshops, and tried to complete my musical knowledge in the libraries of IRCAM and the Centre Pompidou. I started to write chamber music, and did some ballet music for the Ensemble Choreographique de Vry sur Seine."

In 1986, he returned to Germany and – for a short while – to his musical roots. He performed with an *avant jazz* trio and toured with a rock/reggae outfit. "A bit like The Police," he confesses, "with snippets of King Crimson and Franz Zappa added by me – a very weird combination! The singer was a lady from Jamaica, so this part at least was pretty authentic." But Günter soon became frustrated with ensemble playing and with the guitar's expressive limitations. "I

realised that my instrument, the electric guitar, would never be the appropriate means of expression for me," he reflects, "and that composing was more important for me than playing my instrument." After some unsuccessful experiments with synthesizers – he calls it his "Star Wars period" – he bought a computer, a sampler and a DAT recorder and began experimenting. "I already had certain ideas of what my music should be like," he notes. "I wanted a balance between sound and silence, I wanted sounds that would not be imitations of instruments, but could stand for themselves, and that these sounds would be given the time to be perceived as detail. It was also clear to me that the sound coming out of the loudspeakers would have to be the sound itself, not a representation of an imaginary or real world sound."

Günter became a sonic scavenger, sampling short snippets of audio from around the house. He then dissected and abstracted them, removing all referentiality and foregrounding those characteristics that appealed to him. The result was a *catalogue* of auditory onosities – crackles, hums, buzzes, whirs, clicks, scrapes and washes – which Günter's compositions quietly put on display like abstract scrawls on a bare canvas. Like musique concrète pioneer Pierre Schaeffer, he wanted the listener to focus on the "objets sonores", the sound objects themselves, and to forget their original sources or contexts. "I do not want to communicate a message," Günter explains, "but let you experience the sound's own life, its living and moving in its own environment."

Günter's compositional modesty was matched by a fondness for low volumes. "I was working in a large music store," he recalls, "selling electric guitars and basses, amplifiers and effect units, which constantly exposed me to very loud volume levels, so in my own music, I wanted a different approach. I did not want to impose my music onto a potential audience, but just offer it, so that it was easy to ignore for those who did not want to hear it. We are constantly forced to listen to music we do not want to hear in shops, supermarkets, train stations and so forth, and I did not want to be part of these "forced listening" phenomena."

But Günter's musical subtlety and reticence caused him no small trouble. After sending off the final DAT of *un peu de neige sale*, Günter and the Selektion label received calls from the mastering studio and the CD manufacturer, each complaining that the tape was blank or damaged. Even Selektion's boss, Achim Wolschke, who had heard the tape only in the label's noisy Frankfurt office, assumed that Günter had intentionally left the disc silent as some arty Zen statement. "I seriously started thinking about hiding under the bed until everything was over," Günter told *Haïano* magazine in 1998. "You can imagine how surprised I was when the CD came out and mail started to come from people who thought it was great and wonderful."

Günter still saw himself as working within the classical *avant garde* tradition of Pierre Boulez, Morton Feldman and Iannis Xenakis. Indeed, *un peu de neige sale* bears some resemblance to *Concert PH*, the Xenakis classic assembled from recordings of crackling embers. Yet he quickly found himself drawn into a very different scene: the thoroughly non-academic experimental noise underground. Bombarded with requests, he embarked on a series of collaborative projects, recording with Ralf Welnjowsky and John Duncan, and remaking tracks by Merzbow, Frans De Waard, Giancarlo Tonutti and others.

At the same time, Günter was immersing himself in classic Japanese aesthetics and the theory and practice of Zen Buddhism. His fascination for the austere brevity of *haiku* is evident in the title *un peu de neige sale*, taken from the final line of one of

Günter's own: "It would melt/in my hand/a little soiled snow". But then he read Junichiro Tanizaki's classic *In Praise Of Shadows*, where he discovered that all-encompassing aesthetic worldview known as *wabi-sabi*, which celebrates the beauty of emptiness, transience, detail and decay exemplified in Noh theatre, Japanese rock gardens, rustic Bizen pottery and inkbrush painting.

Like many contemporary adherents, Günter saw in *wabi-sabi* an antidote to the commercial excess of capitalist modernity, with its ceaseless production and consumption of shiny new things. I ask him whether he sees any contradiction between his high-tech digital art and his allegiance to an aesthetic view that honours the seasoned products of nature. "It would be foolish to pretend that humans are still living in nature," he counters. "Most of our surroundings are a second nature created by humans – and we're very busy ruining the first nature, which we will pay a very high price for as a species. So instead of leaving the technical tools to capitalism and the 'instrumental intelligence', to quote Adorno, that it uses, I find it appropriate to use these tools for different means. 'Art is something that has no use, but makes sense', to paraphrase Adorno again, and thus is the opposite of capitalism and its instrumental intelligence: everything in it has a use – profit – but makes no sense. If in a concert, or at home, using my digital tools I can give listeners what they themselves call 'a spiritual experience' or 'a very different way of listening to music', I guess my use of them is justified. I don't think banging on a drum would make my music any better."

Wabi-sabi confirmed Günter's own aesthetic instincts while immersing him deeper into the worldview from which it springs: Zen Buddhism. "I am not a practising Buddhist," he explains, "in the sense that I do not perform any daily rituals or ceremonies, although I do some meditation when time allows, or recite a mantra in my mind in certain situations. On the other hand, my Weltanschauung is definitely that of Zen Buddhism, which, being a European, I do not see as a religion, but as a philosophy."

"When I work on my compositions," he continues, "I enter a state of consciousness that is different from my everyday mode of being; and I think this is my way of meditation. I also control the timing of different parts and elements of the music by means of a slow breathing rhythm, like the breathing exercises used in meditation. In this sense, this way of music invites the listener to embrace an enhanced awareness of sound and of the process of listening, who could say it has a meditative side." But he is quick to distinguish his own "meditative" music from the usual associations of the term. "The New Age kind of stuff puts people to sleep," he asserts. "It softens their brains, and wipes out all precise perception and awareness. It is no way to a higher awareness, and is as useless as seeking enlightenment in drugs."

In 1994, Günter released a follow-up CD on Selektion, *Détails/Agrands*. Its two pieces continued to explore the abstract, microscopic soundworld he had laid out on his debut. A year later he founded his own label, *trente oiseaux*, to showcase the growing group of artists who share his minimalist/electronic aesthetic. "I got the name *trente oiseaux* while watching *Ten Fingers*," he explains. "A French theatre director was talking about an ancient Zen legend in which the birds decide to go and find God. After long travels and many adventures they finally find him and ask him to show himself to them. He refuses, but they keep telling him of their hardships trying to find him. So finally he agrees, and what do the birds see? Themselves. And then the guy said: 'In ancient Persian, the name of God is '30 birds' [*trente oiseaux*]. I loved this story. It was so close to the Zen saying, 'You are the Buddha'."

I thought I'd have to use *trente oiseaux* as a title for a piece someday. When I decided to form my own label, I thought: 'Hey, this is what *trente oiseaux* was founded for! Not considering how many people in the world can't even pronounce it!'

From the start, the label set out to present fine-grained, immersive electronics that shunned the showy pyrotechnics of academic electroacoustic music and the referentiality of classic music concrete. Its first year saw releases by Francisco López, Marc Behrens, Daniel Menche and Rafi Wolkowicz. The label also became the vehicle for Günter's own music, which had begun a new direction. Retiring the sampler and forgoing field recording, he started building his music entirely from instrumental sounds sampled from CDs. Asked to name his sources, Günter hesitates. "For legal reasons, I can't answer that," he murmurs. "It does not matter so much anyway, as none of the artists could ever recognise their sounds once I have finished treating them. The more important point is that the sounds I sample have to be 'innocent', as I like to say. They must not contain too much of their origin or the musical structure they come from. So single notes or chords are the main source materials, while full phrases or lines can only be used when they are very short, or not very characteristic of their origin. I combine these samples in time to achieve entire new relationships or 'environments'."

As a result, Günter's sonic palette became warmer and more fluid, shedding woody textures, beatty flutes and metallic horns on recent pieces such as *Then, Silence*; *Brown, Blue, Brown On Blue*; *Redshift* and *Abashed*. His compositions now also revealed a new sense of time and movement. The first two records offered fixed windows onto worlds teeming with abstract figures. But his more recent work is decidedly mobile, propelled forward by drifting swells of overlapping tones. The new release, *Redshift*, for example, begins with a vast, airy whirr accompanied by woody clatter. After several minutes, these sounds fade to near silence only to re-emerge slowly, attended this time by a lonely two note violin figure. Following another patch of silence, shimmering clusters of organ tones appear briefly before giving way to a series of deep, resonant gongs. For the remainder of the 30 minute piece, these elements emerge and recede, alone or in dense combinations, like layers of translucent glacial drift.

Like Feldman, Günter likes to record his own music to the floating, shifting shapes of Alexander Calder's mobiles. The description equally fits Günter's recent work, which owes much to Feldman. Indeed, no other composer or musical thinker so fully accords with Günter's sensibilities. Feldman's devotion to sounds themselves, their births, lives and deaths, the sense of longing and loss his music evokes, and his rejection of systems in favour of intuitive composition, all apply describe Günter's musical attitudes.

Exasperated by his musical contemporaries, Feldman drew inspiration from painters, particularly his abstract expressionist friends Mark Rothko, Philip Guston, Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning. "Music is not painting," he wrote, "but it can learn from this more perceptive temperament that waits and observes the inherent mystery of its materials." Günter heartily concurs. "What music can learn from painting is the 'silence', the stillness, the hovering in time and the absence of words. In the case of paintings that are completely devoid of representational elements. Just like in abstract music you can become aware of colour, texture, form and time." Feldman said: 'I'm painting on time-canvases with sound-objects.' So true," affirms Günter. "I subscribe to that notion in full."

Günter's most explicit effort at sound painting comes in the ghoulish piece, *Brown, Blue, Brown On*

*Blue* (For Mark Rothko). Released three decades after the painter's suicide in 1970, his tribute attempts to render into sound Rothko's signature style: engulfing canvases filled with looming, soft-edged rectangles that set up luminous colour relationships and hint at hidden depths. In his interpretation, deep grainy rumbles enter and exit the auditory field like the slow breathing of a lumbering machine. This somber backdrop occasionally opens out onto sublimely shimmering capricious peals, hovering flutes and choruses of metallic strings. Quietly and unobtrusively, the piece lays on listeners' associations of sonic colour, scanning the spectrum from greys, blues and browns to oranges, reds and yellows. It equally engages their sense of sonic space, ranging across depths and heights, backgrounds and foregrounds. Simultaneously evoking despair and bliss, it captures the emotional essence of Rothko's painterly world.

Reflecting on Rothko's powerful simplicity, Günter remarks, "Looking at a Rothko canvas is a very long process. Although it hits you immediately, you can spend hours with it." His own work manifests a similar complex simplicity. Even so, he utterly rejects the 'minimalist' label. "I don't like any terms" and went to point out that Feldman has nothing at all in common with 'minimalism', he states. "For me, when I have to label him – and myself, at the same time – I choose 'abstract expressionism'. Feldman's music, and mine too, are not at all minimalist. Everything needed is there, no more, no less. Maybe we should think of many other types of music as 'maximalism'."

Compared with Günter's new pair of two-CD sets on LINE – *Monochrome White* plus *Polychrome w/ Neon Nails*, and *Monochrome Rust* plus *Differential* – just about any other music sounds like bombastic excess. It's his quietest, most stripped down work to date. It is also some of his best. Harking back to his debut, each works exclusively with tiny, ear-tickling granules of noise. The most elegant, *Monochrome White*, paints a crackling, crystalline world, the aural equivalent of snowflakes or icicles in molecular flux. Günter's basic structural principle – shifting layers that slowly bring new sounds to the fore – still applies. But here the transitions are all but imperceptible, forcing listeners to make minute differentiations between the many shades that make up this monochrome palette.

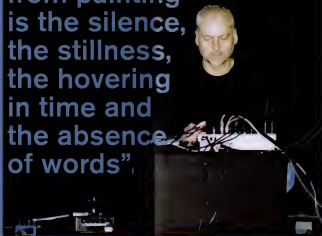
Like Feldman, Günter likes to record his own music to the floating, shifting shapes of Alexander Calder's mobiles. The description equally fits Günter's recent work, which owes much to Feldman. Indeed, no other composer or musical thinker so fully accords with Günter's sensibilities. Feldman's devotion to sounds themselves, their births, lives and deaths, the sense of longing and loss his music evokes, and his rejection of systems in favour of intuitive composition, all apply describe Günter's musical attitudes.

Exasperated by his musical contemporaries, Feldman drew inspiration from painters, particularly his abstract expressionist friends Mark Rothko, Philip Guston, Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning. "Music is not painting," he wrote, "but it can learn from this more perceptive temperament that waits and observes the inherent mystery of its materials." Günter heartily concurs. "What music can learn from painting is the 'silence', the stillness, the hovering in time and the absence of words. In the case of paintings that are completely devoid of representational elements. Just like in abstract music you can become aware of colour, texture, form and time." Feldman said: 'I'm painting on time-canvases with sound-objects.' So true," affirms Günter. "I subscribe to that notion in full."

Günter's most explicit effort at sound painting comes in the ghoulish piece, *Brown, Blue, Brown On Blue* (For Mark Rothko). Released three decades after the painter's suicide in 1970, his tribute attempts to render into sound Rothko's signature style: engulfing canvases filled with looming, soft-edged rectangles that set up luminous colour relationships and hint at hidden depths. In his interpretation, deep grainy rumbles enter and exit the auditory field like the slow breathing of a lumbering machine. This somber backdrop occasionally opens out onto sublimely shimmering capricious peals, hovering flutes and choruses of metallic strings. Quietly and unobtrusively, the piece lays on listeners' associations of sonic colour, scanning the spectrum from greys, blues and browns to oranges, reds and yellows. It equally engages their sense of sonic space, ranging across depths and heights, backgrounds and foregrounds. Simultaneously evoking despair and bliss, it captures the emotional essence of Rothko's painterly world.

Reflecting on Rothko's powerful simplicity, Günter remarks, "Looking at a Rothko canvas is a very long process. Although it hits you immediately, you can spend hours with it." His own work manifests a similar complex simplicity. Even so, he utterly rejects the 'minimalist' label. "I don't like any terms" and went to point out that Feldman has nothing at all in common with 'minimalism', he states. "For me, when I have to label him – and myself, at the same time – I choose 'abstract expressionism'. Feldman's music, and mine too, are not at all minimalist. Everything needed is there, no more, no less. Maybe we should think of many other types of music as 'maximalism'."

"What music  
can learn  
from painting  
is the silence,  
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of words".



WORDS: PHILIP CLARK  
PHOTOS: MARC-HENRI CYMBERT

THROWING DOWN A CHALLENGE TO THE LAZY ORTHODOXIES OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC, FREDERIC RZEWSKI'S SELF-STYLED 'TRADITIONAL MUSIC' HAS BEEN FUELLING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN IMPROVISATION AND COMPOSITION FOR FOUR DECADES. AFTER MOVING FROM THE CONCRETE RADICALISM OF MUSICA ELETTRONICA VIVA THROUGH ENCOUNTERS WITH STOCKHAUSEN AND CORNELIUS CARDEW, THE EXPAT AMERICAN COMPOSER IS NOW WRINGING NEW FORMS OF PROTEST FROM THE PIANO

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# Manufacturing dissent





"There's something hilarious about this term 'contemporary music,' scoffs Frederic Rzewski.

"Typically a contemporary music programme contains pieces that are 50 years old. If you tried to sell cars with the same logic, people would laugh at you. Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* is still labelled as contemporary music, but that's like claiming that Art Nouveau is new. Actually it was a movement that's now 100 years old and is really a historical label.

"Jazz" is equally comic," he goes on, getting into his stride now. "The music flourished in the middle of the last century but it's now an old form. Young improvisers are certainly influenced by the tradition of jazz, but would we really want to hear a young guy play if he referred to himself a 'jazz musician'? Even the label 'free improvisation' has too much baggage connected with the 60s.

"These words are always confusing. By the time the term has established itself in the language, the music has usually gone on to something else for which there is no word yet. For years I would stammer when businessmen on aeroplanes asked me what kind of music I made. It took me years to find an answer and I now tell people I make 'traditional' music. It's a truthful answer that satisfies people."

Frederic Rzewski has always dealt in the currency of truth. As an idealistic composition student, I first encountered him at the 1993 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. During a pre-concert talk with the festival's artistic director, Richard Steinitz, Rzewski traumatised many in the audience by complaining that a festival dealing in New Music which called itself a 'contemporary music festival' was suffering from delusion. "Contemporary music is something that was written in the 1950s," he snarled. Later in the festival I showed him a massive orchestral score I was working on. Not only did he laugh at the oversized case I needed to carry my 38-stave manuscript paper, he also quipped the whole purpose of writing an orchestral piece at the end of the 20th century anyway. "Have you actually got anything to say with the orchestra," he pressed, "or is your ego just wanting to make a big noise?" I hadn't, and it was. Rzewski had planted important seeds.

Nine years later, I'm interviewing Rzewski in a flat in London. Currently living and teaching in Liège, Belgium, the composer has come over here to perform Cornelius Cardew's epic solo piano work *We Sing For The Future* at the Conway Hall as the climax of the Cardew Day in December 2001 (reviewed in *The Wire* 216), organised by Cardew's surviving colleagues. The last time I saw Rzewski perform was in a solo lecture/recital at Huddersfield, where he played his own *Andante Con Moto*, described as "14 variations without a theme by Beethoven", and his Piano Sonata in which "Santa Claus is Coming To Town", "Ring Around The Posa" and "Three Blind Mice" are spliced with the 14th century mass *L'Homme Armé*. The day's events also included a rapturously received performance of Ligeti's Piano Concerto from a capacity audience. Rzewski had an enthusiastic and respectful response from a smaller audience who knew they had heard something extraordinary but were struggling to explain exactly what. If the Ligeti represented contemporary music, then the Rzewski was New Music.

If Rzewski's claim that he makes traditional music rests uncomfortably with 'traditional', notated forms of music, then his work challenges assumptions about tradition. It's not a comfortable or cosy concept for him, rather a radical set of principles to be continually refreshed and reapplied. Rzewski emerged back in the 1960s with the leftist Improv collective *Musica Elettronica Viva*; later, in New York, he unpicked the distinction between composition and improvisation in such politically motivated works as *Coming Together* (1971). But it was through his first music teacher, Charles Mackey, that he realised a tradition existed alongside newer concepts "for which there was yet no word".

Mackey was a communist sympathiser in the years when America was emerging from McCarthyism, and he instilled a heavy dose of Marxism on the young Rzewski. He also encouraged his pupil's desire to explore "dissonant" intervals by sending him down to the listening booths of his local record shop in Westfield, Massachusetts to hear works by Shostakovich and Schoenberg. Mackey seeded in Rzewski the ideal that music should not be isolated from life, an aspiration the young composer felt was severely absent from his studies at Harvard and Princeton. Generations of the American musical elite from Leonard Bernstein to Elliott Carter had taken a similar route, but Rzewski found the schools more productive for the contact he made with radical composers of his own age, who included Christian Wolff and David Behrman, than for his formal studies with the composers Walter Piston and Roger Sessions. The music department at Princeton, where architectural Milton Babbitt held court, Rzewski found "snobbish and isolated", and it was only when he moved to Rome with a Fulbright Scholarship that he began to find his own voice. He now thinks that moving to Europe saved him from drifting into academia by opening his mind to less dogmatic areas of composition and improvisation.

"Moving to Europe gave me the possibility to become a professional musician and I made a living as a pianist," he says. "I worked the European festival scene with [avant garde flautist] Severino Gazzelloni and I became the pianist in Stockhausen's touring group. But I found it difficult to be limited to the role of being the performing arm of the creative establishment. I had too many ideas of my own but then again I wasn't comfortable with everything that came with being a 'European' composer. And that was how *Musica Elettronica Viva* started. It seemed an alternative to both of these things, and something apart from the elitist contemporary music establishment."

The first *Musica Elettronica Viva* (MEV) events took place in 1966 in Rome. As well as Rzewski, the group revolved around a core that included Richard Teitelbaum on synthesizer, saxophonist Jon Vander, Allen Curran, Allen Bryant and Jon Petteplacé playing an assortment of homemade instruments. The group cut a decidedly anti-establishment dash; Rzewski himself played a sheet of plate glass that had been cut into the shape of a grand piano. He attached contact microphones and watchsprings to his instrument and then found as many ways as he could to play it. Richard Teitelbaum has reported that

Rzewski once put a bust of Beethoven in thezewski basket as they performed. Rzewski's feelings about the group's relationship to tradition, as he expressed in a note on their 1987 piece *Spacecraft*, is revealing. The performance, he wrote, "may be called 'anti-music', [but] awakens the soul to its demonic state; and only then may the exorcism begin, the struggle to cast lines through the tumult to another soul."

Rzewski agrees that MEV shared the musical and social concerns of Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra — another ad hoc ensemble with political intent that appeared at the tail end of the 60s — but he also contends that his group drew on a wider set of ideas and influences. The starting point of the group was our common interest in cheap, low-tech live electronics which, in my case at least, was strongly influenced by the work of John Cage and David Tudor. We stood opposed to the more expensive studio techniques which were current and this was just as well because we had no money. We used cheap contact microphones and little Japanese mixers that we bought for \$5 on Canal Street and pushed them as far as they would go."

The initial purpose of MEV was to showcase compositions by its members. However, their improvisatory approach evolved naturally from dealing with unpredictable circuits and homemade electronic devices, some of which were precariously jury-rigged inventions. Rzewski recalls, "We were all connected through mixers that were leaking into each other and sounds were generated partly electronically and partly through scraping different objects and materials. One could never quite be sure which sounds were your own and which were coming from somebody else through the four or five loudspeakers we used. It was easy to make mistakes and get lost in the resulting mixture, but that was when it became interesting. This was the late 60s — whether one smoked then or not, the influence of certain chemicals were always in the air, and this could lead to quasi-mystical experiences. Group improvisation was a natural consequence of being in this environment."

"Rome at that time was a very open city, and we had our studio near the centre," he continues. "Our first concerts had been in bourgeois venues, but having played there once, we were never invited back. We then played in venues with leftist student organisations, but the studio became our base. We played there most nights and artists, musicians, actors and writers floated in and out. We only made contact with the improvisation movements coming from the jazz world later. We'd been in touch with Anthony Braxton and Steve Lacy, and in 1968 the Detroit Free Jazz Group showed up in Rome. These guys were honking on saxophones and had a different cultural background, but our groups came together quite easily."

The encounter with the Detroit Free Jazz Group, a unit led by trumpeter Charles Moore with future Art Ensemble Of Chicago percussionist Don Moye, triggered a new direction for MEV. The group opened their work up to all comers and coined the term "Soundpod" to describe these noisy, anarchic sociopolitical jam sessions. As many as 150 people took part at any one time, Rzewski recalls, and MEV's members would try to guide the direction of the music through their superior synthesized frequency."

"The Scratch Orchestra was more of an individualist organisation," he continues. "Individual people did their own projects and not all of them were to do with music. Our primary concern was music and the aim of our Soundpod pieces was to make massive sounds, if people could play even a single note on a trumpet, they could come along and make their contribution. Some pirate CDs are floating around and they sound like a traffic jam."

During the years of MEV's existence, Rzewski hardly wrote notated music, but the experience of improvisation was to leave indelible traces on his later work. After leaving Rome, he spent the early 70s in downtown Manhattan. He describes the music he wrote there as "rather hypnotic and formalist, with limited tonal and rhythmic resources", as if formalism became a necessary antidote to the exultant bedlam of the MEV years. The fascination of Rzewski's music remains in this tacit dialogue between rigorous formal compositional and structural techniques, and a looser more intuitive edge that derives from his experience as an improviser. His classic set of piano variations, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* (1975), based on a revolutionary Chilean song, has a rigid mathematical structure that concerns out from the 36 bar structure of the original song in the way fractals expand as they turn on their own axes. The marathon set of 33 variations Beethoven wrote on a waltz theme by Anton Diabelli hover in the background, but such rigour only eggs on Rzewski's free-wheeling impulses. The structure becomes a giant receptacle into which 19th century piano gestures collide with atonal blocks and splashes of Cecil Taylor-like noise. References to other revolutionary songs — most notably the Italian "Bandiera Rossa" and Hanns Eisler's "Soldatisches" — are woven into the texture, and the pianist is also required to whistle and sing.

Rzewski does allow for a freely improvised cadenza towards the end of the piece, but at this level the whole work feels like an epic, written out improvisation. Jazz only forms a small part of his interest in improvisation. He appears on Anthony Braxton's 1976 *Creative Music Orchestra* recordings on Bluebird playing four-hand piano with Mualhi Richard Abrams. However, Rzewski's performance on Steve Lacy's song cycle *Packet* (New Albion 1995) reveals more about his own culturally inclusive vision of improvisation. *Packet* uses texts by Julian Beck and Judith Malina, whose Living Theatre group operated in Rome in the 1960s and shared the aesthetic and political agenda of MEV. Throughout *Packet*, Rzewski's accompaniments exist in a noticeably different orbit to Lacy's more tongue-tied improvisations. His gestures and flourishes often relate to Bach, while his embellishments to Lacy's spiky themes are rich with references to the 18th and 19th century European piano tradition. Only in the final song, "Do Not Judge Me Lightly" does Rzewski sound remotely like he's drawing on a more modern American piano style. This non-generic vision of improvisation, he suggests, remains rooted in discoveries made during the MEV years. "All the people involved in MEV were composers," he says, "and although we've given our individual projects priority since, we still look to MEV as a source of ideas and we continue to come together. We were radically — even self-destructively — into free improvisation, but our basic priority was to explore this area in order to make new discoveries in composition."

So does Rzewski improvise like a composer, and compose like an improviser? "I'm in no way suggesting that we lift the improvised music and write it down," he replies. "The connection is more subtle. Working in improvisation over the course of 20 years or so made it possible for me to find ways of composing that would not have been open to me had I spent the time in front of manuscript paper. In the late 60s, we had a somewhat simplistic idea that improvisation is nothing more than composition in real time. Now I hold a quite different view and I think, in fact, these two activities are completely separate and involve different types of memory. When composing, the important thing is to transfer impulses from short- to long-term memory, so you can hang on to something long enough to write it down. It's like remembering your dreams, but in improvisation I think the situation is exactly the opposite. You try to forget what just happened so that

you can move on to something new. It's like crossing the street in heavy traffic — you can't get bogged down in what just happened or else you get killed. You need to be constantly on the move and open to what's new."

However Rzewski is convinced that the two methods are also related. "Lee Konitz and Steve Lacy are both structuralists with a composer's approach to their material," he argues, "and Cage's objections to improvisation reveal a lot about him. The example he set to MEV had to do with his work in electronics, and his views on improvisation were actually rather puritanical and hardly very freeing. Although he did it, he didn't really approve of improvisation and he wasn't nearly as tolerant as most people think. In many ways he was like an old-fashioned preacher who thought that there was only one 'right' way to do things."

During his time in New York, Rzewski concentrated on the modular, text-based pieces *Coming Together* (1971), *Altira* (1972) and *Struggle Song* (1973). Scored for a speaker and any ad hoc ensemble, the works offer another example of Rzewski provoking a loose improvisational feel by setting strict parameters. *Coming Together* is based on the experience of Sam Melville, who was arrested in November 1969 and charged with the bombing of various Manhattan financial buildings the previous year. Melville was an advocate of direct action against those institutions he thought served poverty through their business. He was allegedly murdered by prison guards, who then used a prison riot to cover their tracks. Rzewski sets a letter Melville wrote to his brother in prison in which he describes his state of mind and the drudgery of his daily existence. Splitting the text into 14 "cells", which the speaker declaims additively (e.g. 1+2, 1+2+3, etc.) allows Rzewski to imply the numbing claustrophobic grind of Melville's prison life, while giving a twist of pathos to Melville's observation, "I am in excellent physical and emotional health. There are doubtless subtle surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready." The ensemble treats a punchy melodic line in a similar fashion, and the piece lends a gritty sense of political rhetoric to the normally cerebral world of process music.

The most obvious musical model for *Coming Together* is Terry Riley's 1964 pulse-minimalist landmark *In C* which, as Rzewski points out, had roots in improvisation. Riley was in Rome when Rzewski visited Rome in 1964, and Rzewski later toured with the Italian composer Sylvano Bussotti, giving recitals of works by Riley and La Monte Young. "At the time," Rzewski says, "the term 'minimalism' hadn't yet evolved and it was simply another strand of the avant garde. It was a distinct movement, and one that involved a collection of people using ideas that were in the air. For instance, we performed music by Giuseppe Chiar, who was a master, but he never became a cultural icon like Philip Glass or La Monte Young."

"It's a mistake to explain these strange cultural phenomena with simple theories," he warns. "The success of Görecki in the early 90s opened the door for people to appreciate music by Feldman and Howard Smeckman. And yet Chiar remains unfamiliar. There's a similar situation with people who emerged from the Scratch Orchestra. Michael Nyman and Gavin Bryars both became rock and famous, while others are unknown. And yet if you look at their music, it's often very difficult to distinguish between these people. In the early 60s, Thomas Schmitt, Terry Jennings and Eric Anderson were major figures involved in the minimalist movement who have since disappeared from view. I think Tom Johnson is one of the major American composers, but for some reason he's never been in the media spotlight. His *Four Note Opera* and *Bonhoeffer Oratorio* are significant masterpieces."

I suggest that, for Rzewski's own purposes, the



**"You can never trust an artist to give a truthful opinion about their own work – it's just not possible"**



music we now call 'minimalism' was bound to be too restrictive. Was using limited harmonic and rhythmic patterns an exercise in wiping the slate clean before reintroducing the many other musics he is interested in? "Well, I've never had what you would call a 'style,'" he retorts. "I used to feel guilty about this, but then decided that's just the way it is. All my life I've been fooling around with different ideas and directions. I've tried some for longer periods of time and dropped others. But you can never trust an artist to give a truthful opinion about their own work – it's just not possible. Cardew had an unusual gift for spotting the weaknesses in other people's music, which made him a good teacher, but he had a complete blind spot when it came to his own shortcomings. Likewise I can tell you about my life and give you my subjective experiences and even my opinions, but I can tell you nothing about my own style. I believe people make important decisions about their lives for no reason at all, and then go back and justify them later. If you find a reason for what you did 30 years ago, you're probably lying to yourself and to others."

Despite Rzewski's reticence in talking about 'style', there is an audible evolution from *Coming Together* in the early 70s through to *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* and then on to the ensemble works *The Lost Memory and Spots from the 80s*, and the setting for 'speaking pianist' of Oscar Wilde's, *De Profundis* from 1992. The work is a dramatic tour de force drawing on all the aspects of music and the wider arts to interest Rzewski. Yet at its heart is his enduring relationship with the piano. Throughout this period the pieces engage an increasing variety of source material – blues, jazz, Beethoven, Bach, folklore and Russian music – and often feel as much like performance art as 'pure' music. *De Profundis* borrows another text from an outsider in jail, Oscar Wilde's famous letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, and is a compelling mélange of structural rigour with parody and allusion. It requires the pianist not so much to recite Wilde's text as to act it out, as pianist and piano become, to coin a phrase, a 'living theatre'. The lid of the piano is now a drum, and even the piano stool is incorporated into the action. Throughout the performance, the pianist inhales and exhales anxiously, while occasionally retching and screaming.

It's no coincidence that the piece of plain glass Rzewski played in MEV was cut into the shape of a grand piano. If there is a single trait that draws the keyboardist to the piano, it is his voracious understanding of what makes his chosen instrument tick. The pianism Rzewski exhibits on the recent New Albion disc of Cardew's late solo works, *We Sing For The Future and Thälmann Variations*, harks back to a very old fashioned kind of virtuosity. These Cardew pieces inhabit the world of the late Beethoven piano sonatas and the solo works of Grieg, while Rzewski's performances cogently underpin Cardew's ironic provocation of the contemporary music elite.

Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew met for the first time at the 1960 ISCM festival in Cologne. Their shared interests in philosophy and political theory brought them together musically. A few years later, they undertook a tour performing their own pieces and as well as a realisation of Stockhausen's *Plus-Minus*. Today Rzewski still regards Cardew as one of the most important figures in British experimental music, but he has serious reservations about the direction his music was taking in the last decade of his life, when Cardew became a hardline Maoist.

"I began to worry about what was happening to my friend's brain," Rzewski explains. "I felt he was becoming cut orientated and I didn't approve of the progressively narrowing area of his political interests. The danger artistically – and I think it turned out this way – is that this situation threatened to end his

audience into an elite every bit as narrow as the elite he was fighting. The audience for New Music was small enough anyway, but Cornelius threatened to make himself accessible only to fellow communists. Paradoxically, his late piano pieces and the rock songs he wrote for the People's Liberation Music group were designed to appeal to a mass audience, and he did play to large groups of people at political meetings in East London. Had Cornelius lived, perhaps he would have appealed to the rock audience Philip Glass tapped into. We can never know, but we can say that he 'cut himself out' of the contemporary music scene very effectively.

"I always felt uncomfortable with Cornelius's professed political positions," he elucidates. "Their primary function, it seemed to me, was to provoke the social class that committed the cultural scene. He was a Socratic personality and one of his specialties was to induce movements and activities in others. Sometimes he did this through music and argument, and at other times he achieved it simply by doing nothing. He had a very special manner of being rational and cool. Those who were against him would try to provoke him and would get very excited for the very reason – Cornelius would sit there, do nothing and never rise to the bait."

Rzewski regrets that Cardew's late piano works are often misinterpreted as a regressive statement, agreeing with pianist John Tibury that Cardew was an experimenter until the end of his life. "In the very last works there are strong indications that Cardew was rediscovering the language of the avant garde," he conjectures, "but in a piece like *We Sing For The Future* he is experimenting with the language of the late Beethoven string quartets. He's got a theoretical basis for proceeding in this direction, to do with socialist realism, and he was the first to deal with these ideas. In a sense he was directing formalism against formalism. But then John Adams became very successful in later years using a similar play."

A forthcoming seven CD set, *Rzewski Plays Rzewski* (Nonesuch), will amass a 25 year retrospective of his own music, including recordings of *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, *De Profundis*, *Fantasia*, the *Piano Sonata* and four parts of *The Road*, a seven hour work the composer has been assembling since 1995. The set highlights the paradoxical relationship in Cardew between a traditional medium and the turning point his experimental mind. When he started playing the piano, when he was three – and never stopped," he points out – and he sees 'the composer' and 'the pianist' as being two separate entities with a symbiotic relationship. "The best way of getting my music out is to perform it myself," he believes. The majority of his music is for solo piano, or for ensembles like the American group Zeitgeist, with whom he has built a long-term relationship. The impossibility of developing similar relationships with orchestral players has largely made him stay clear of orchestras and similar faceless institutions. "Orchestral players never choose to play new pieces, and who can blame them?" he asks. "The scores often submerge their creative personalities, and the whole set-up of the orchestra is a hangover from the feudal system. It worked 200 years ago because the relationship between the players reflected the current social order. Now things have changed, and they still orchestras will die out."

"I recently wrote my *Symphony for a German Radio Orchestra*," he continues. "I wanted parts of it to sound like a herd of animals and not be synchronised. The conductor had his own ideas about how the piece should go and he insisted on 'keeping it together'. These experiences are indicative of the impossibility of doing experimental things with the orchestra, and I always find myself turning back to the piano. My composer-self gives my pianist persona very

reasonable commission rates, and at the same time the composer provides fresh repertoire for the pianist – we make a good team, I enjoy playing the piano at home, and *The Road*, the Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* or Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*, is meant as much for home consumption as the concert hall. This what I mean by 'traditional' music. I feel very much in this tradition of European keyboard music from the 18th century onwards."

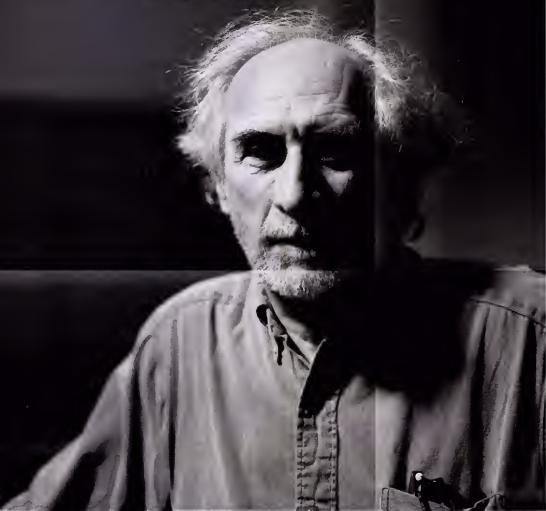
Rzewski hopes to complete *The Road* by the end of this year. Its eight parts are designed to become increasingly longer as the music progresses. "The first four parts are about two hours in total and the seventh part is nearly two hours by itself. 'The Road' is usually something that's already there when you turn onto it, and continues when you turn off and the piece is a similar way of experiencing time and space. I think of it as being an epic Russian novel in the tradition of Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, and I wanted to write a piece that was so long that people would be unlikely to hear it all in one sitting. In that sense it reflects the fact that in real life you don't really get the whole thing all at once."

"Another reason for the length was that I wanted my ideas to change about the piece as I was writing it. I've tried to certain basic forms, but the piece has certainly evolved as I've worked on it. Again, this is like real life where one doesn't stick to the same idea indefinitely. As it happens, Michael Finnissy has been working on a similar project – *The History Of Photography in the 19th Century* – and I was worried that we might be writing the same piece. I think Michael's piece is one of the masterpieces of modern piano writing, but our approaches have very little in common. Michael gravitates between souped up Elliott Carter and Aeolian quotations, but he leaves out the kitchen sink. I, however, make a special effort to put it in. I use auxiliary percussion and sound effects, and the music is full of vocalising and whistling. This is what Elsie and Brecht called 'musik' – something between music and noise – and it's like diving along the road and seeing a heap of mangled metal and carcasses from an accident. Then you drive on to something else. It's a vision of life as a mangled mess of order and disorder which somehow adjusts itself as you drive along."

When MEV were performing Christian Wolf's *Sticks* – in which the musicians collect twigs and other bits of wood to perform on – at London's Purcell Room in the late 80s, Rzewski recalls that Cornelius Cardew had his friends set up a table carrying a whole tree. This begs the question as to why the generation of British composers who followed Cardew are not filled with the same idealistic zeal. But Rzewski feels that we now have reasons for optimism. "Today the situation is changing and that's probably been true for a couple of years," he says. "During the last 15 years of the 20th century we saw a profound cultural dip and the generation of composers who are now between 25 and 40 are a sad bunch. There seems to be a tacit agreement among these people that culture has somehow ended. They are shellshocked, producing music that is retro, 'neo' and 'post' without any thought given to what comes after the 'post'. But now I see my students are becoming interested in experimentalism again."

"Europe seems full of underground scenes, similar to my own in the 60s," he concludes. "Young improvisers in underground clubs are producing music that's grassroots and responses to it. It also involves writers and music improvisation, electronics and folk songs, all combined into a disorderly mixture. It's hard to say what it is about, but it recognises that music and culture have a future." □ Cardew's *We Sing For The Future*, played by Rzewski, is out now on New Albion; MEV's *Soundpool* is on Get Back/BVG; MEV's *Speccroft* is on Alga Marghen. Rzewski Plays Rzewski box set is currently in production by Nonesuch

**“All the people involved still look to MEV as a source of ideas and we continue to come together. We were radically – even self-destructively – into free improvisation”**



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EXTENDING THE CUT 'N' PASTE TECHNIQUES OF SUCH PIONEERING FIGURES AS DOUBLE DEE & STEINSKI, MANTRONIX AND THE LATIN RASCALS, DJ SHADOW RECONFIGURED AND REIMAGINED HIPHOP ALONG PURELY TEXTURAL AND PATTERNED LINES. BUT AFTER HIS SPACIOUS, EMOTIONAL COLLAGES WERE MISINTERPRETED AS 'TRIPHOP', HE RETREATED INTO THE MORE CHALLENGING AND PERSONAL MUSIC CONTAINED ON HIS NEW ALBUM, *THE PRIVATE PRESS*

# Fighting the good fight





**Over the past decade,** Josh Davis, better known as DJ Shadow, has been involved in two of HipHop's visionary labels, Mo' Wax and Quannum/Solesides, collaborated with legends like David Asirod and Stenski, cut one of the genre's most influential records in *Endtroducing* (1996), and toured the world many times over. But opportunity doesn't come without cost, and a heavy sigh escapes the gentle Davis the afternoon as he anticipates the mess of photo shoots and industry engagements that sometimes overrun Shadow's life. Where Davis is a shy and unassuming everydude, Shadow has become an empty cipher strung and stretched every which way to fulfil the expectations of those who love/hate/intellectualise/don't understand/hope to change HipHop and/or DJ/beet-making/beet-digging culture. Despite his best intentions, DJ Shadow exists more as an idea than a person, a keyword to denote sundry musical half-revolutions, philosophies or subcultures, few of which Davis himself actually endorses.

But one thing is for sure: Shadow is one of the popular faces of today's cut 'n' paste experimentation, sample manipulation and process oriented music, intriguing listeners with both his means and his ends. Unfortunately, they have often earned him far away from the HipHop culture that birthed him, and landed him in the lush if uncertain arms of fiction genres like *'downtempo'* or *'loophop'*. It's understandable why his compositions confuse categorisation. Traditionally built on eyeball to eyeball competition and MC braggadocio, so little HipHop today catches you in its paranoid sweats, or inhabits that cathartic, affirming moment of release. But Shadow's reconstructions are moody and bewildered in ways that transcend verbal narration, and though they may not be the same stones told by KRS-One or Kool G Rap, they invoke the same ethic of altered realities and earnest tussles with morality and mortality.

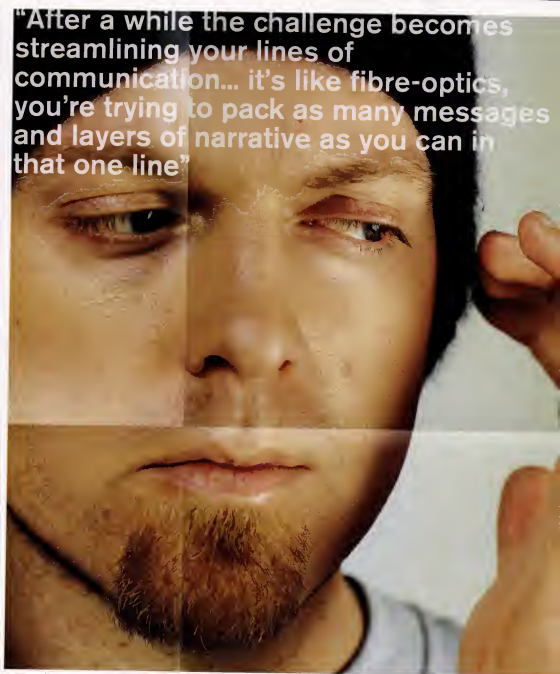
Not much in HipHop admits its own weakness, gazes upon its own facilities or treasures peace of mind. Even less HipHop aspires away from the spotlight and carries no hint of swagger, tending toward the, ahem, shadowy background instead. "My analogy is, I'd rather be the director than the actor," says Shadow, "you call all the shots but you can walk down the street and nobody knows who you are." And here we are, on this hazy spring day, going unrecognised as we walk briskly down a city street in Manhattan's SoHo district. Shadow is in town courtesy of his label Universal, whose deep pockets have landed this modest, smalltown boy from Northern California in New York's hippest extremity for a short trip promoting his sophomore solo album, *The Private Press*, even though for him there's no greater torture than boomeranging between industry obligations. "I never like to make music that can be played in a Gucci store or a coffee shop," he quips, as we exit his hotel and pass several coffee shops and stores selling Gucci. Surveying the take-bake pedestrians and upscale boutiques, he laughs at the irony: "We're getting the whole street flavour here."

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

All great ideas must start somewhere, and for Davis, a childhood fascination with mismatched and juxtapositions led to him crafting his own little edits, cutting together sound effects he recorded off TV shows and conversations, or cutting out little heads from magazines and pasting them on other bodies. An infatuation with Aet Of Noise's mash-up of primitive beats and sound collages, and an early purchase of Sugarhill Records' *Street Beats* compilation cemented his interest in applying these ideas to music.

Davis's parents divorced at a young age and he spent his formative years shuttling between his mother's residence in Davis and his father's place in

"After a while the challenge becomes streamlining your lines of communication... it's like fibre-optics, you're trying to pack as many messages and layers of narrative as you can in that one line"



San Jose. Though the respective cities sit only about a hour to the north and south of Oakland and San Francisco, in the 1980s they bore little resemblance to the nearby cosmopolitan centres of the Bay Area. The serene, cow-smeared streets of Davis are maintained by a modest economy built on farming and local college kids, while the suburban lowland sprawl of San Jose has always had the acreage and population of a big city, but none of the perks. Either way, Davis's childhood environs were about as far as you could get from the park jams and block parties of HipHop lore. In his teens he had already learned to prize the rare bits of knowledge he acquired, studying whatever records made it out to his parts of the Bay and trading with overseas collectors.

"We'd go to San Francisco a lot," Davis recalls. "In B4-85, we'd go to Pier 39, that's where the breakdancers set up. So I would listen to what they were playing on their box and try and remember what the hooks were. I remember distinctly hearing them breakdance to 'Calling Dan The Dream Team' by The LA Dream Team, and I went out and tried to look for anything that had 'Dream Team' in the title."

There's a noticeable spike in Davis's demeanour when he gets to reflect on the influences of youth, as though all the pomp and circumstance of semi-stardom dissolve and disappear. He escapes, if for a moment, and returns to the first time his tender, teenage feet rocked the carpet of San Jose's Star Records to buy T-La Rock's 'Back To Burn'; or he revisits the feeling of nestling up to his box and taping local DJ Cameron Paul's mix show the time he premiered Steinski & Double Dee's 'Lesson 3'. Scratching the shitticker groove that represents the only thing remotely aggressive about him, he smiles: "Somewhere I've still got that tape."

Davis bought a four-track recorder in 1988 and started improving on the loops and collages he had made as a kid. Though these mixes didn't make it far out of his bedroom, his growing enthusiasm necessitated a workable stage name. "I had had all my corny DJ names in the 1980s," he laughs. "Not that they meant anything because I wasn't actually performing anywhere, but I was trying to pick one that would resonate." Mercifully, names like DJ 24-Karat and DJ Motovator — "It stood like Miami Bass" — fell by the wayside, and in 1990 he came up with Shadow, providing countless lazy photographers and writers an easy name to manipulate or pun.

"The name wasn't that scientific," he declares. "In 1990, you had a lot of producers trying to be stars, like Hurty Love Bug, even Marley Marl. All the producers were starting to try and get in on the action, in the videos and whatever. I just kind of felt like a producer's place was in the background."

His schoolteacher mom ensured that Davis ended up in college like the rest of the family, but an unlikely mentor guided him to his course of study. "I was watching *Yo! MTV Raps* and they had Kool Moe Dee," Davis says. "He was standing on some street in New York going, 'Yeah, a lot of these rappers, the thing they don't understand is [that when their rap career's over, they'll take me]. I got a degree in Communications, I'm college-educated...' and then [the segment] just kind of cut. This was about the time I was applying to colleges and I didn't know what I wanted to do... so I just went, 'Well, if it was good enough for Kool Moe Dee, it must be good enough for me!'"

Enrolling at the nearby University of California at Davis, he soon fell in with a loose confederation of students who were often found rifling through the campus radio station's extensive record library during Jeff 'Zen' Chang's weekly show. Rather than competing for breaks, the clique — which formally included Shadow, producer Chief Xcel and rappers Gift Of Gab, Lateef The Truth Speaker and Lyrics Born — agreed to pool their resources to lay the foundation for their

Soleisides label.

Davis had already compiled a series of mixtapes he titled *Reconstruction From The Ground Up*. Circulating among a close circle of confidantes, journalists and artists in 1991, the now legendary tapes contained some of his instrumental beats and mixes, prompting Dave 'Funkie' Klein to ask Shadow to work for his Hollywood Basic label. Moving all his records and equipment to a parents' house for the university's two week winter holiday, Shadow worked deep into each night and emerged with his Steinski & Double Dee homage 'Lesson 4', the 'Legitimate Mix' and fragments of his 17 minute, six-part suite 'Entropy'.

At the time, Shadow was still using a single, belt-drive turntable and his old four-track, looping samples manually like pause button tapes. Without access to a sampler to lay breaks down mechanically, he spent hours working on a single, four minute beat, rewinding the tape and re-cutting the entry point on the record each time. While the tape spoiled, he would wait for the drop and lay the break in again, painstakingly building a short drum loop before moving on to other layers of instrumentation. He eventually bought a pair of Technics 1200 decks later that year and an MPC rhythm sequencer in 1993.

Despite the primitive approach, there was something special about Shadow's mixes from this period, and the difference was evident on the 'Legitimate Mix', a six minute piece he prepared for Zimbabwe Lele, a Hollywood Basic project marketed earnestly as 'Real African Lyrics, From Real Africans', inching forward with a stern yet subtle defiance. Shadow's composition was an accomplished layering of jazz samples and scratched vocal samples that together imitated the vast debt HipHop owed to Africa. It was muted, open-ended and radically different from a similar track about South African police sirens and narrated news reports of brutality in South Africa's Pretoria township. As if he hadn't made the point clear already, Davis pieced together a sample of Star Trek's Mr Spock chirping, 'As a Vulcan, I find the need for racism totally illogical.' Somewhere along the way, however, his skills at narration and intrigue caught up with his penchant for dense, evocative musical arrangements, and he points to the 'Legitimate Mix' and 'Lesson 4' as crucial turning points. He didn't revolutionise the art of blending and musing, but he did start teasing out the line between beats and songs, songs and articulate thoughts.

"That's always the good fight," Davis explains, referring to the art of storytelling. "You don't want to just connect the dots for the listener, I just wasn't sophisticated enough to know that back in 1989 or 1990. I think with any artist who has done a lot of songs, after a while the challenge becomes streamlining your lines of communication, not to the point of where it becomes pop, but just to the point where there's so many subversive... It's like fire-ops, you're trying to pack as many messages and layers of narrative as you can in that one line of communication."

#### IF THE SHOEHORN FITS...

In 1993, Soleisides released its first single, a double-A side pairing of Lyrics Born's (then known as Aya Born) 'Send Them' and Shadow's 'Entropy'. The Hollywood Basic material had ploughed the interest of James Lavelle at London's Mo' Wax label, and Shadow released the 'In Flux/Hindsight', 'Lost And Found (SFL)' and 'What Does Your Soul Look Like' singles to absurd praise. In 1994, the infamous 'TriPlop' article appeared in *Mixmag*, coining the generic name that has since forcibly absorbed everyone from Shadow to Tricky to The Chemical Brothers.

The avalanche of praise that descended on Shadow

seemed to miss the big point of his 1996 debut album *Endroducing* when they parodied its creator as the young, white saviour-savant who had grown up in a vacuum and stumbled on the "insane, trippy, scary and very dope" sound of "Dr Dre on mushrooms" (Mixmag's words, not mine). An annoyed snarl hijacks his usually placid face as he recalls the two adjectives from that period which annoyed him the most — "downward" and "jazzy".

*Endroducing* was no much greater than the sum of its ingredients, and such platitudes were too feeble to capture the album's narrative reach. No longer reliant upon vocal samples or ready-made concepts to help ease his stories along, Shadow was, in his own words, whittling down his fire-opic approach on songs like the evolutionary rush of 'Napalm Brain/Scatter Brain' or the idyllic 'Midnight In A Perfect World' — the HipHop approximation of a satisfied sigh. As an album, *Endroducing* didn't operate by making listeners simply cry or smile. Its territory and angles tripped you into a contemplative depression or taught you to regard the hazy, pinkish dissolve of daybreak with a newfound sense of respect. It was an album of unlikely ambition that not only introduced HipHop to bold new ways of seeing its own slash technique; it also provided introspective new ways of seeing its range of affections and vulnerabilities as well.

Upon returning from a promotional tour of Britain, Davis found himself unrecognisably angry. "I don't know why," he remembers, tentatively. "I felt kind of like, 'OK, is that all there is? Is this it?' I had never been through the experience of stuff like that, having so many people tell me what they think of what I did, it was just a weird experience. I came back and I was in the same crappy, dirty apartment, and I was like, 'So now what? Is that what my life's gonna be like, every couple of years I go through that?' He siphoned his anxiety into the four minute skronk of the single-only 'High Noon', all harsh guitar spikes and manic drums. Making 'High Noon' was just like therapy," he explains. A personal favourite, the song stands as a reminder not to take the business end of things so seriously. "Like George Clinton said, you can make it in this business if you don't get mad or go crazy," he continues. "What that means, essentially, is get angry to the point you can't concentrate, or get bitter to the point you can't function. I know I'm lucky and every time I put out a record I have no expectations. I just want to do it better than the last time."

His participation with James Lavelle on UNKLE's *Psyence Fiction* album didn't exactly leave him feeling better disposed to the scene. For someone who had grown up in near confinement, urged on only by his glorious records and his imagination, this ambitious, star-studded project was an understandable disruption to Shadow's way of working, not to mention the way he was received. The details of the concept-heavy collaborative project were initially shrouded in innuendo and half truth, when the only concrete participants were Shadow, the precocious Lavelle — and a Tolomex of famous friends, such as Radiohead's Thom Yorke, Beastie Boy Mike D and The Verve's Richard Ashcroft. Though the record, *Psyence Fiction*, was named before it was made, it contains some of Shadow's finest moments — check 'Guns Blazing' or the orchestral boot-clap of 'Celestial Annihilation'. The project's completion was put back so often, the finished product was more merciful release than carefully realised concepts. "After UNKLE, I felt like my career was all about re-establishing my roots," grumbles Shadow, recalling his flirtation with celebrity. Poised on the verge of something huge, he took a step back and refocused on projects that would keep him sane and satisfied. He put together a couple of funk compilations, exorcised the wildly popular/populist Brainfreeze and Product Placement mixes with Cut Chemist, toured with Quannum, penned sleeve notes for

David Axelrod, did some spot work for the film *Dark Days* and Prince Paul and Automator's Handsome Boy Modeling School.

Much has changed for Shadow since his swift rise to fame, as his insistence on reaffirming his roots after UNKLE seems to indicate. "All these doors had opened up to me and I just wanted to follow them all, even if there's no commercial gain," he says. "That's the big fear of all artists here, myself included, that you're going to wake up and become irrelevant one day." If Shadow sounds like just another reluctant outcast figure, his concern about being misrepresented or unduly praised is real. In his own eyes, he is essentially refining the radical concepts that mogamirs, edit wizards and production visionaries like Stenski, Mantronix, The Bomb Squad, The Latin Rascals, Chep Nunez or Paul C came up with years ago. The true shame, in his view, is that most of these legendary names today live the dustbin of history, that they have somehow become 'irrelevant' despite the role they played in starting the tradition most pundits credit him with popularizing. Through it all, however, Shadow is understandably philosophical about his place in this history. As he explained in Scratch, an excellent 2001 feature-length film on the history of HipHop DJs, "Just being in here [the basement of his former hometown record store] is a humbling experience, not because you're looking through all these records and it's like a big pile of broken dreams. Almost none of these artists still have a career really, so you have to kind of respect that, because if you're making records, you're adding to this pile whether you want to admit it or not. Ten years down the line you'll be in here... Keep that in mind when you start thinking, 'Oh yeah, I'm invincible' or 'I'm the world's best,' because that's what all these cats thought."

If Shadow has remained humble by his changing place in the world, the world itself has not stopped changing around him. When I first heard "Lost And Found" as a geeky high school kid in the Bay Area, ignorant to the HipHop revolution happening an hour away, I was baffled and stunned: How in the world did he do that? If anything, HipHop production had always operated with a little bit of slop, whether it was the taped edges showing of a poorly engineered loop, or the stinky hint of the chopped horn on a reconfigured drum pattern—there was always something artificial and chillingly military about the sample-based HipHop production in my neck of the woods, and Shadow's remaining of those source materials as a new, organic whole successfully dispensed with the pageantry of words in favour of something more open-ended and universal. It opened up new political and practical avenues, and allowed the kid from the suburbs an identity and purpose (as well as sending rare funk records and breaks soaring in price). Five years later, a whole Internet culture of shorty sample skits during for Shadow's prints had emerged, cracking his code and exposing his tricks at every turn, always with 'nuff respect', even as, little by little, they took the chisel to their man's legend. Mixtapes and compilations offer lazy diggers access to the bones of Shadow's stories, and by the time he resurfaced for the "Dark Days" 7" in 2001, I wasn't baffled anymore—'Oh, he just looted David McWilliams' "House Of Mirrors" and threw on some guitar stonerisms". It was still great, but with the tools and maps inherited from Shadow to hand, it was easier to break down his process and pretend you understood it all.

## BACK TO BURN

Just when the gumshoes had seemingly caught up, with dozens of bedroom producers and downtempo artists being lauded both as "Endtroducingesque", Shadow decided to switch things up a bit. "When I start working

on a record, I don't go to records I already have," he explains. "I go out and I shop differently. If I want to make music that's different, I have to plug different music in... I don't like to look where I feel there's a lot of fingerprints. That's sort of why I had to let the funk thing go for a while, because everyone's doing it now." Planting himself into a corner of sorts, he consciously looked elsewhere for source material, and as a result the Private Press, the Private Press, invokes more psychedelic garage rock and modern rock than funk. The record sounds fairly '1980s', partly due to the types of music he scored while trawling for raw materials. The collection of modern rock, quirky electro-pop and "weird, 99 Records-type stuff" that came into his local record shop proved particularly available. "I hope the album inspires people to check out other types of music and to be really open minded," he says. "Different types of music can help different people in their daily lives. Imagine if Bambaata had never heard Kraftwerk because someone told him, 'Hey, this isn't for black people'. If he hadn't heard it..." muses Davis, shivering. "I dread to think."

Though they come together as a unique whole, the various tracks produced during the sessions for *The Private Press* lack any consistent sonic signature. The monostomp lead single "You Can't Go Home Again" scrolls toward the finish line of an imaginary John Hughes-style teen melodrama, the intro to "Dismal" ("Dismal" is to be released as an upcoming B side) echoes the electro scratch Shadow first suggested on UNKLE's "Celestial Annihilation". If godfath execution and rip-roaring guitar make "Mashin' On The Motorway" Shadow's funniest song ever, "Mongrel... Meets His Maker", just a couple of seats away, is probably his most claustrophobic and constrained. "My main working theme was non-linear," he comments. "That and the word 'challenging' just kept turning over and over in my mind for months before I started working on the record." Attempting to break from the techniques he had mastered and the samples he had already used, he inaugurated work on the new album with a track called "Monosyllabic". Handcuffing himself to a single, two-bar funk loop of bass and guitar, the cut is one of Shadow's most experimental as a proper producer, consciously avoiding the loop 'n' paste approach and instead carving from dub to IDM over the song's spicuous seven minutes. Drums are stretched, wound and echoed to unnatural extremes, kicking with a booming finality one moment, retreating and getting the chop treatment the next. The compressions and expansions near the end even sound vaguely Kid606-ish, though Shadow never allows his core rhythm the privilege of spluttering unbound. "It was definitely the most labor intensive song I've done," he concludes.

As a whole, *The Private Press* is tense and stubborn, almost upright. "Fixed Income" crashes along at an unforgiving clip, with spare guitar jangles and m-strokes dragged in the undertow. An a cappella from 1970s UK psych outfit Colonel Bagshot is thrown into "Six Days", with each bubbly crescendo of marching drums and sangerist protest shivering back down by each verse's end. Droplets of choiced plucks give the masterful "Giving Up The Ghost" a creaky quality, which, like the two part "Mongrel... Meets His Maker", demands release, only none is given. Despite flashes of obvious humor, *The Private Press* is a claustrophobic and dark, rejecting the idealism and untouched innocence of past classics like "Midnight In A Perfect World" or "What Does Your Soul Look Like".

"There isn't a pretty slow song to kind of make you feel like, 'Ahh, I'm back at The Gap,'" he explains, while we are walking down a street so haute couture that a new Gap store would signal plummeting property values. "I feel like my life is more complicated now," he continues, "I don't always know the answers. It just feels a bit more like my own reality, not to have any easy answers at the end."

It isn't until a loud crash rings halfway through the nine minute "Blood On The Motorway" that the album's tension dissolves and the momentum peels away. Built on an elegiac piano progression, a blanket of strings and a touching if over the top vocal sample about innocence lost and ideals kept, "Blood" is easily one of the most moving and refined constructions of Shadow's career. It's a turning point, an invitation to detail—those past layers of a journey narrative, keeping things open-ended yet private and obscure. Though the loud crash that separates the two sections of "Blood" sounds like a gunshot, Shadow reveals that it's actually a sample he recorded manually, to underline the sombre theme of the song. "In "Blood On The Motorway", I'm trying to explore the theme of death and dying and the whole judgment process," he clarifies. "The whole 'You're not quite living but you're not quite dead', that in-between zone. The sounds in the middle, in that separating section—what you referred to as a 'gunshot'—actually, it is a bunch of children stomping their feet in unison. It comes from a Hawaiian chant for a dead child, it's the same sound you hear on "Giving Up The Ghost", incidentally." It's a fascinating flourish that, like the concept behind "Monosyllabic", will likely remain more of an in-joke or unappreciated detail. But Shadow seems to enjoy this kind of interpretive infatig. He has learned to deal with the pressures of attention, and he listens closely and carefully to any alternative interpretations of his songs, interested in how his creations are being reassembled and re-felt in public space.

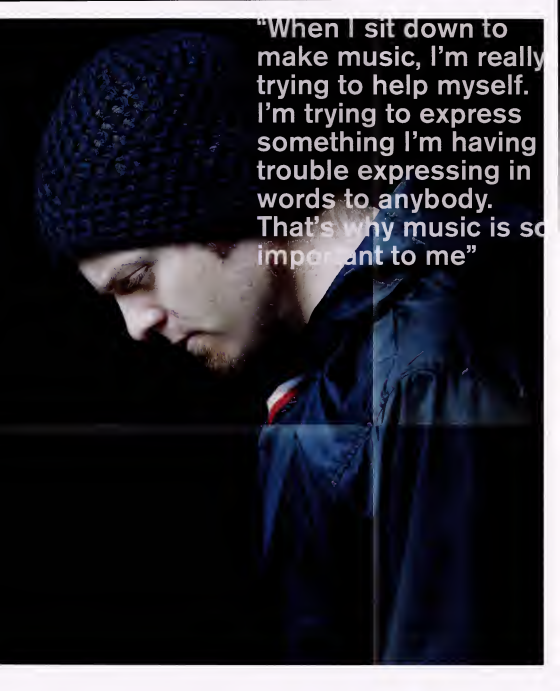
The only thing he seems to resist is a definitive reading of any of his songs, and that's why the standout cut "Six Days" had to be renamed. Shadow explains, "I changed the title from "Six Day War" to "Six Days" because people are unable to understand that you can do a song called "World War II" and not have it be about World War II." The a cappella Shadow dug up is a rather literal, day-by-day report of bloody duty pigs and double-spending politicos inching toward warfare. If the timing of its release suggests some 9/11-type subtext, he'd prefer to leave meaning up for grabs. "I made it in May 2001," he clarifies, "and in actual fact, I don't think [Bagshot's] song is explicitly about the Six Day War—I interpreted it as more about relationships."

Victory seems custody battles now out of the way. Shadow has finally reconciled all the expectations placed on him. Like the a cappella sample of forgotten 1980s crooner Marc 2 says, when it ball-busts during "Blood On The Motorway": "You have not betrayed your ideals—your ideals betrayed you." Confident in his own convictions, the hard part—attaching his thoughts and feelings to collages of other people's former thoughts and feelings—is done, for Shadow's therapy is in the process. Freeing his songs to the world, it's up to the rest of us to get whatever we want out of the damn things. Sometimes it's nothing, sometimes there's a silver of an answer folded in there, but it's never meant to stand obvious.

"Honestly, when I sit down to make music, I'm really trying to help myself," he concludes. "I'm trying to express something I'm having trouble expressing in words to anybody. That's why music is so important to me. Once I feel like I've scratched my own itch, so to speak, then, being aware of that, I'm thinking, 'How can I leave it open-ended so that it can help others?' That's why it's important not to have the narrative so explicit."

"On the UNKLE liner notes, the outro says, 'No easy answers this time,' and I think since *Endtroducing*, I've been aware that, as nice as it is to come full circle and be plopped back down wiser, sometimes the path doesn't lead you back to where you left. Sometimes it leads you somewhere totally different. From album to album I think it would be nice to explore as many different paths as possible." □ The Private Press is out this month on Island/Universal



A close-up, low-key photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark, textured knit beanie. He is looking down and slightly to his left. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and the texture of his beanie, while the background is dark. The image is split vertically down the middle.

"When I sit down to make music, I'm really trying to help myself. I'm trying to express something I'm having trouble expressing in words to anybody. That's why music is so important to me"

PITCHING PRECARIOUSLY BETWEEN ROCK, IMPROVISATION, EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE ART, FEW GROUPS EMBODIED THE 1960s' INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR TOTAL FREEDOM AS WHOLEHEARTEDLY AS **THE PEOPLE BAND**. CHAMPIONED BY CHARLIE WATTS, THIS ECSTATIC IMPROV COMMUNITY COMBINED AN OPENNESS TO MIXED MEDIA EXPERIMENT WHILE BRINGING DOWN THE BARRIERS SEPARATING ARTIST AND AUDIENCE. YET THOUGH THE GROUP INCLUDED FILM DIRECTOR MIKE FIGGIS AND FUTURE MEMBERS OF SOFT MACHINE, GONG, COLOSSEUM, IAN DURY'S BLOCKHEADS AND MIKE WESTBROOK'S ENSEMBLE, THEY WERE FATED TO BECOME BRITAIN'S MOST FORMIDABLE FORGOTTEN GROUP. MEETING FORMER BAND MEMBERS TERRY DAY, MIKE FIGGIS, GEORGE KHAN AND OTHERS, JULIAN COWLEY PIECES TOGETHER THE LOST HISTORY OF A LATE 60s FREEDOM PHENOMENON

# People have the power





On 1 October 1968, ten musicians met for a recording session at London's Olympic Studios. Collectively this group was known as The People Band, and that was also the name given to the album they made that day. Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts acted as producer, and Ian Dury, at that time primarily a painter, was a guest in the control room.

Both were there as friends of Terry Day, one of The People Band's drummers. Watts admired Day's playing and had invited him to record, with no preconditions. Day convinced musicians he had worked with on a regular basis for a couple of years: pianists Mel Davis and Russell Hardy, drummer Tony Edwards and Nigerian percussionist Eddie Edem, saxophonists Lyn Dobson and George Khan, bassists Frank Flowers and Terry Holman, and trumpeter Mike Figgis. The music was at times fiery and tough, at other times gentle and intricate. It was improvised and touched on free jazz, but it fed from other streams too. Mike Figgis, who went on to become the celebrated director of such films as *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Internal Affairs*, *Timecode* and the recently released *Hotel*, still finds the album exciting. "It's a remarkable blow," he says.

"Microphones were placed all over this large studio, everybody moved from microphone to microphone all the time."

Such mobility was entirely characteristic of The People Band. Openness and inclusiveness were in the air during the period from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, when The People Band flourished. There were other strings in improvised music in London at the time: AMM started to play regularly at the Royal College of Art during 1969, and from 1966 onwards, John Stevens oversaw improvising sessions at the Little Theatre Club and assembled the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. But The People Band has somehow been sidelined in accounts of improvised music, to a point where it is all but forgotten. Many informal recordings were made, but *The People Band* was the group's only official release. "A recording puts you on the map," Terry Day observes. He enjoys hearing it but expresses some dissatisfaction. "It lacks the spontaneity and organic flow of gigs; not as raw, free, anarchic, chaotic. The People Band live was like a huge rollercoaster. Once it started, the music was unstoppable. At times it was scary in its power, like a huge surge of energy. An engineer would have had great difficulty getting a focused recording."

At The People Band's concerts, musicians would wander freely, mingling with the audience, exploring and "creating a total sound throughout the space", as Day remembers. "Fixed instruments such as drums or piano acted as a focus for intense music and close dialogue." Multi-instrumentalism was encouraged. "Those who wanted to play each other's instruments did so, and as the evening proceeded people from the audience would invariably pick up instruments that were lying around." Terry Holman, a session guitarist who had been rehearsing as part of a backing band for Frank Sinatra, relates that he dropped in on their 1968 recording date curious to see what was going on, only to end up playing on the album. "My landlady gave me a violin the day before," Holmes continues. "I'd never played one, but I got a solo for that record I actually cut hairs off a horse's tail myself and made a bow from a flexible piece of willow. It was very wide, so I could slacken it off and play four note chords on the double bass."

Members of The People Band might have experienced, but their musicianship was concentrated and intense. Looking back, Mike Figgis feels fortunate to have made music with "real giants". "Mel Davis is entirely a one-off," he enthuses, "with energy like Cecil Taylor; otherwise unlike him, but with that ability to make a piano out through everyone else's collective sound, a powerhouse technique. George Khan was phenomenally loud and inventive; really powerful. Terry

Day is maybe the greatest drummer I've ever heard and completely unique. In a class of his own, very eccentric but with power that I've never encountered before or since. He'd have this completely free implied pulse going, an incredible, high energy pulse. Even when he was being quiet, the sense was that things were moving very quickly."

Their one album remains an impressive document, even if the music strains against the limitations of the medium. But despite his high profile, Charlie Watts was unable to secure an outlet, and it wasn't until 1970 that Transatlantic, a label best known for its folk releases, issued *The People Band*. Holman recalls that it wasn't just the music that baffled executives. He says, "We negotiated for the shortest possible contract and the least amount of money. None of us wanted to be tied up. No more, thank you: that's it."

The People Band had its origins at a jazz club set up in 1965 by Mel Davis, Frank Flowers and big band leader Derek Goom at the Starling Gate pub in Wood Green, North London. The venue attracted leading figures on the London scene such as alto saxophonist Ray Warleigh, bassist Graham Collier and pianist Chris McGregor. Davis himself drew inspiration from Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor, but was also interested in Charles Ives and Béla Bartók, and read John Cage. He developed ambitions to "expand jazz" and was trying out new approaches to Monk tunes, playing with Flowers, subsequently a double bassist with The Haild Orchestra, and saxophonist Lyn Dobson, who later joined Soft Machine's short-lived big band line-up. Then other adventurous musicians arrived, including The Russell Hardy Trio. Out of public view, pianist Hardy had been playing with drummer Day and bassist Holman for five years, evolving a distinctive kind of free music that, according to Day, "took on its own form. It was timeless, free of strict time, an organic free flow, open-ended, not based on any sequential, thematic or chordal structure". Holman recalls, "Most jazz at the time had a theme and you'd improvise a few choruses, but we just started and went on, very stopped. Russell was a very quiet pianist but, then fast. Terry Day sandpapered his drumsticks until they were very thin and was faster than any drummer I've ever heard, and I had to learn to keep up. I began using the bow. I also fixed an old one-string fiddle amplified by a horn onto the bass with G-cleams, so the bridges were at the same level, and used it as extra high string."

The trio had played a few concerts, mainly at the Royal College of Art, where Day was studying. The small audiences included Ian Dury ("our main buff"), then an RCA student who shared a flat with Day. At the Starling Gate, Davis was preparing his piano and playing with a certain wildness that encouraged the trio to request a gig. In turn, Davis was impressed. "The first night they played I had a gig somewhere else," he remembers. "I got back and Derek Goom said, 'You must go up, there's a drummer using knitting needles!' Terry had Salvation Army bass drums and hubcaps and coka bottles, as well as all these cymbals and a really good kit that Charlie Watts had given him. What an amazing drummer!"

Jam sessions followed. Day's kit grew huge, adaptable to many demands. For Davis, Day's presence was like a whole orchestra playing behind him. A group called the Continuous Music Ensemble came into existence. At its heart were Davis, Day and Holman, but it grew into an open affair. Day defies its fundamental assumption: "Music is in the air. Music is always there. Catch it when you can, catch it when you want. For music is continuous – it never stops. All you have to do is plug into it. It's all around." Holman picks up the theme, adding, "Our philosophy was that we were tuning in to natural rhythms that were round about us. We had an aversion to electric instruments –

it was the State that was supplying your power. We tended to go for acoustic instruments that used human breath or human vibration of strings." Others who contributed vitally to the Starting Gate ferment included saxophonist and poet Barry Edgar Pitcher, who had developed his own approach to free playing. Gufamst Dave Kingsley and percussionists Eddie Edom and Glen Sweeney were also involved in their increasingly unfiltered music making. Holman and Davis subsequently played with Sweeney's Third Ear Band, and Davis's cello can be heard on their album *Alchemy* (1969). Another influential newcomer was saxophonist George Khan, poised to make an impact with Mike Westbrook's Orchestra (on 1968's *Release*, 1969's *Marching Song* as Nasir Ahmad Khan and 1972's *Solid Gold Cadillac*; he also guested on Robert Wyatt's *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* LP, among countless other engagements). Drummer Tony Edwards, now with jazz group Big Chief, knew Davis and alerted Mike Figgis, then an aspiring jazz trumpeter and music student at Trent Park College, to the fact that something special was happening nearby.

"I'd never heard anything so outrageous," remarks Figgis. "I'd never heard music like it, and they were open to the idea of people sitting in." Davis initially tried to work with unorthodox scores, including leaves. "I'd been into drawing pictures and paying to a light show," he explains. "As if we needed to hang onto something, it was Terry Day who said, 'Let's not have anything at all. Why don't we scrap the whole thing and just play sounds?' Gradually we got to grips with the idea of having no idea." Lights remained an ingredient, but now the nature of the music was shaped by "the musicians themselves, the environments they were playing in, the horns they were playing, where their heads were, what they'd been brought up on – you had a form already". The group outgrew its jazz club origins and searched out other contexts to open up the form. Many venues were visited, including newly established

arts laboratories in Drury Lane and Robert Street in Central London, and the Wood Green Arts Centre, formerly a church hall. "The Starting Gate was more focused, not so broad", Day recalls. "The church hall was big and we could play all evening. Anything could happen. A rich mix of genres, idioms, styles – reggae, funk, jazz, rock, classical, blues, free – flowed together in the improvisation." The Continuous Music Ensemble became The People Band, in part to affirm that this was music by, for and about people. Additionally the need arose to avoid confusion with John Stevens's recently formed Spontaneous Music Ensemble. And the new name acknowledged ongoing collaborations with the performance art group The People Show.

People Band music thrived on new encounters. Collaborations brought in elements of uncertainty and surprise that kept their improvising fresh. Different venues demanded flexible responses. The People Band had a nucleus of musicians preserving its identity but, Day remembers, "There was no guarantee who would turn up for a gig, or how many. New players would arrive. Members would bring along musician friends. There were always unknown factors." Reedsman Paul Jolly, who joined in 1968, feels that "the best gigs were the ones where people just arrived. Word would go out there was a gig somewhere. The gig was whoever turned up." This could produce precarious situations. One Day alone turned up for a concert in Brussels. He became The People Band and quickly involved members of the audience in a typically lengthy performance. Often there was artistic cross-fertilisation with poets, dancers, film, installations, mime and performance artists, including Stuart Brisley. Carlyle Reedy read her poems; Annabelle Nicolson painted; Jonathan Nicol painted, used slides and film, concocted smells on a kind of portable barbecue and played penny whistle; photographer Ian Jacobs produced pupal installations and took up the alto saxophone.

More ambitious still were interactions with The People Show, a theatrical collective formed in 1966 by Mark Long, Jeff Nuttall, Syd Palmer, John Darling and Laura Gilbert. Their fervent collision of theatre, sculpture, poetry and mayhem initially found a home in the basement of Better Books, on Chancery Cross Road, then managed by poet Bob Cobbing. The People Show still exists, conjuring "a certain weird collective magic" (in Nuttall's phrase). In the early days Davis, Holman and Day were drawn into their exploits. Then The People Show moved from the bookstore cellar to Drury Lane Arts Laboratory, founded in 1967 by Jim Haynes and Jack Moore. The People Band joined them. Day describes the Arts Lab as "an experiment in social revolution". It distilled the radical spirit of the late 60s, fostering exploration of all kinds. This was the heyday of Happenings, mixed media events that thrived on simultaneity of disparate events, unexpected juxtapositions and leveling of aesthetic and social hierarchies. The People Show/People Band alliance at the Arts Lab, and at hip clubs like Middle Earth and UFO in Central London, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and even at the Royal Court Theatre, fed into this creative surge. George Khan remembers reading in *International Times* about the first Better Books event. "I thought, 'I'd like to be involved in that', and soon afterwards I was," he says. "I did bits and pieces, and in 1978 I joined on a permanent basis and have been a core member ever since." Mike Figgis was enthralled when he witnessed an event at the Arts Lab, in which the audience was placed in four huge cages made of chicken wire and bedsprings, encircled by musicians, then released into the darkened room one at a time to be grilled by a sinister People Show interrogator. The People Show reconsidered the status of audiences. Davis's approach was still more radical. "I was a teacher and used to make percussion instruments with the kids and we'd play them," he says. "The People Band said everyone has a capability

PREVIOUS PAGE: PEOPLE BAND FOUNDER TERRY DAY. BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: PERFORMANCE AT HOLLAND'S PARADISO; MIKE FIGGIS; PEOPLE SHOW IN NORTH LONDON



and can enjoy themselves. Play, learn, but most of all we have fun. Words are about definitions; music is much more open and we thought, 'Let's open it more!'

This expansiveness could result in friction. Figgis remembers, "At a certain point the anarchy of The People Band started to become unworkable with the kind of structure that a performance art group is aiming at. And The People Show's need for structure became an irritant to The People Band. One night there was a huge fight involving a sheet of corrugated iron. It was the split-point where The People Band's frustration at being held in check and The People Show's frustration at having their lines obscured by very loud music ended inevitably in a parting of the ways. Everyone was fairly young and, given how much creativity and energy there was, I think it's remarkable that it held together really well. At its best, when the two groups were firing in a sympathetic way, it was just incredible." A fertile and generally harmonious alliance came to an end.

Khan and Day kept a foot in both camps as musicians and actors. Figgis joined The People Show in 1970, opting for their more structured approach, but he remains loyal to the spirit and achievement of The People Band. He recognises exceptions, but is appalled by "the apathy that exists now in terms of creativity, the absence of any spirit of anarchy and the dull conformity of formulaic structures that people have locked back to. I'm trying to get into a mode of working that refers back to a far more useful model—openness, the ability to make mistakes and not find them devastating but say that's interesting, hearing what other people can do."

Other momentous encounters took place. Julian Beck and Judith Malina took their Living Theatre's liberatory bohemian Paradise Now to London's Roundhouse, where The People Band swept through the audience in a musical orgy. "Drove everyone wild," Khan remembers with relish. "We had an ability to drive

people crazy. If you were willing to go along with it you could reach ecstatic states. It had that sort of power. It's what I admire in Coltrane and miss in a lot of jazz. Like speaking in tongues, only you can make decisions. It might not have meaning in orthodox terms, but the idea that nobody is going to stop you doing this is an unbelievably liberating experience." Musica Elettronica Viva member Alvin Curran remembers a shared concert at the Purcell Room in 1969 that led to chaos with "police and fire-service intervention closing the public's participation in the 'music'". There was interaction with The Scratch Orchestra at the same venue in 1970, and trumpeter Mal Dean arranged an exchange with his group The Amazing Band, even though he knew their more restrained improvising would be swallowed up in The People Band's heft.

Terry Day recognises that some musicians found The People Band "too chaotic, too anarchic, too raw for their taste". Khan concurs. "Some musicians didn't like The People Band at all," he says. "They had this idea that you must learn how to play something before you can do something. That's OK to some extent, but it doesn't have to be. You've got the one life, so you have to choose what you want to do. If you want to make noises and do strange things, then why not do them? It doesn't harm anybody. Other musicians sometimes would get annoyed and be scolding. I've no idea why, because there was no money to be made from it. People did make noises and did whatever they wanted to do. I thought it was fascinating. It was a very different experience from anything I've experienced then or since."

A widely experienced musician as well as a formidable one, George Khan was inspired to play saxophone after hearing Charlie Parker recordings as a teenager in Karachi; but he soon realised there was no point in emulating Parker. Later he unsuccessfully

requested tuition from John Coltrane, but knew copying him would be equally unproductive. Khan did take lessons in America from reedsman Sam Rivers. He also read Cage and responded eagerly to the inquisitive spirit he encountered at the Starting Gate. He had already played improvised music at poetry and jazz sessions organised by poets Pete Brown and Michael Horowitz. His collaborators included saxophonist Dick Heckstall-Smith and composer Cornelius Cardew on guitar. In 1966 Khan recorded Local Colour, with rising stars of the British jazz scene: bassist Tony Reeves and drummer Jon Huseman (both soon to play with Heckstall-Smith in the jazz-rock group Colosseum), Peter Lemer on keyboards, and saxophonist John Surman. Lemer, whose many credits include a stint with Gong, occasionally played with The People Band and Surman also participated. Dave Chambers, who like Khan and Surman played saxophone with Mike Westbrook, got interested early on. "I was only a peripheral member," he points out. "We did a memorable gig at Robert Street Arts Lab that in a way sums up what The People Band was about. A metal piano frame was leaning against a wall. We were all blowing like mad and at one point somebody pushed the frame over. The noise was incredible! Everybody stopped playing. This gig finished when the frame fell over. That for me sums up the what the band was about." The musical situation developed its own rules from within and ran according to its own logic.

The music, which would flow for three or four hours continuously, grew denser as more players arrived—numerous saxophonists, several bassists including jazz players Johnny Dyani and Butch Potter, and bassist John Porter, who later worked with Roxy Music and produced The Smiths. Pianist John Mitchell astonished everybody with his amazing musicianship. Cardew and members of MEV visited Wood Green, Chris Spedding, the versatile guitarist who played with Khan in Pete

LEFT TO RIGHT: TERRY DAY; GAVIN RYME (LEFT); 70s SPLINTER GROUPS OMU, THE SMOOCH AND MUMMY FOLLOWING PAGE: PEOPLE SHOW MAYHEM, LONDON, LATE 60s



Brown's rock group The Battered Dramatics, also dropped by Ice Spedding, Khan has an aptitude for moving between contexts. "I seem to have had an ability to slot in anywhere," he avers. "I remember one day while I was out Terry Day wrote the word 'chameleon' all over the walls of my studio. If you played in more orthodox contexts and they asked you to play this free thing it was like a flavour rather than an end in itself, and that would occasionally become awkward in my mind. Why not start off that way?" The People Band album features the key players who brought the group into existence (minus Barry Picher). Around the time of its recording there was an influx of new blood, sympathetic to Khan Band ideals. Those ideals were strongly felt, but left unstated.

"There were lots of words floating about at the time," Day observes. "There was also a lot of contradiction between words and deeds. The People Band was defined by actions." There were emphatically no leaders, but the defiantly anti-authoritarian Mel Davis proved a strong magnet, drawing others into situations where they could exercise their own freedom and make discoveries. "Mel's house in Palmers Green was a meeting place," affirms Figgis. "Younger musicians like Paul Jolly, Dave Payne and I very much thought of him as a mentor. We would talk all night about Bach and Schoenberg. He'd explain things far better than any teacher I ever had."

John Khan, a guitarist Jolly had been taught at a Luton secondary school by Davis, who organised jam sessions for more intrepid students. Lyn Dobson, at that time a railway worker rehearsing in his signal box, joined in. Jolly later moved to Birmingham and in 1968 received an invitation from Davis to join an expanded People Band. Dave Payne, now well known as the vibrant saxophonist with Ian Dury's Blockheads, received a similar invitation from Albert Kovitz, an accomplished American clarinetist, who had become a member at a gig at The Crypt in West London. Payne had taken lessons with tenor player Don Rendell in 1963, but his expansive musical taste made him restless with straight jazz. "I was listening to avant garde French flute. Bartók's sonatas for solo violin, Schoenberg, sir player Vilyat Khan." With The People Band he played sax, flute and sitar and shewave generator. He had already collaborated with an experimental dance troupe, a mixed media group at the Middle Earth and environmental and conceptual artist Bruce Lacey. Bassist Charlie Hart, who has subsequently worked with rock musicians including Eric Clapton, Ronnie Lane and Chris Jagger, joined in 1970. He too was with The Battered Dramatics, alongside Dobson who "during a rehearsal turned to me and said 'Do you want to play some real music?'" remembers Hart. "I said yes, and Lyn took me up to Mel Davis's house. There was a grand piano in a small back room. In the course of the next few months I went there many times and was repeatedly bowled over by Mel's amazing attitude to music. On one level The People Band was to do with American jazz traditions. On another level it was very much to do with what each individual could bring to the collective music. There was a lot of laughter as well as acute racial awareness, and often I found myself playing music I had no idea I could play. Terry Day was often there and the whole environment was very inspiring and empowering." Figgis recognises the generosity with which more seasoned People Band members accommodated younger players. "I'd experienced post-bebop groups where there was technical uptightness," he says. "Listening to old tape recordings of The People Band, one can hear techniques that were extraordinary, but not conventional." Regulars took risks and kept their edge. "I found it very exciting and nerve racking not to know what you're going to be doing," says George Khan. "I had conversations with myself: 'Do I try to play what

somebody else is playing or do I just play what I'm going to play anyway and see how that sounds?' I never had a preconceived idea. It was like sitting at a keyboard and trying to compose all the time, avoiding certain things which you know are easy options."

In 1968, the group travelled to the Netherlands and played to large and responsive audiences in many towns. In Amsterdam they appeared at clubs such as the first, Melkweg (Milk Way) and Paradiso. On the first gig they supported tenor player Don Byas. Another American, pianist Burton Greene was drawn to their celebratory spirit and their musicianship, and through him the group established contact with improvisers including drummer Han Bennink, pianist Misha Mengelberg and bassist Maarten Altena. Younger musicians such as saxophonist Luc Houtkamp were often in attendance. Paul Jolly remembers Bennink perched behind Day on the stage, watching him with great intensity. Day has vivid memories of Dutch audiences squatting on the floor and gradually edging towards the group. After an hour they had closed in, ready to take up any vacated instruments. "I handed them my sticks," he smiles. "Paul and Davey would hand over their horns, adding the farist round their necks and help with fingering. Charlie would make sure they held the bass firm. After a while The People Band had become the audience and the audience had become the People Band. The transition so often in Holland was so uncanny." After a while the musicians would reclaim their instruments and continue to play.

Involvement of audience members was a signature aspect of the group's performances, wherever they played. "The music alternated between being very open and being music made by the accomplished," says Day. "The People Band regarded music as inclusive of all sounds and encouraged belief that all people have musical abilities." This could lead to rawness, but Payne stresses, "We were playing extremely sophisticated music." Figgis explains that "there was a level of performance that was a median"; the musicians might decide to raise the level of skill involved yet less accomplished participants could "remain within the ensemble and provide texture".

Holland became a second home for Day, Jolly, Hart and Kovitz for the next few years. They found accommodation on a moored Transatlantic liner, The Caledonian. Everyone had a cabin, there was a dancehall to play in and, Payne remembers, "a cafe that was open all hours, where you could have mint tea, get stoned, listen to Frank Zappa". A less glowing memory was the occasion when The People Band shared a bill with gritty Dutch rockers Golden Earring. It was an afternoon gig and the improvisers were allocated roped off space in front of the stage. After a short while the rock audience and Golden Earring themselves started to react with open hostility. The promoters requested an early termination and The People Band complied.

Unfortunately, this wasn't their only encounter with trouble. Day remembers a performance for an Anarchists' Ball in London that had to be truncated because some audience members who were waiting for folk singers threatened violence. The ugliest gig of all was at Keele University, where drunken students verbally and physically abused the musicians. This was a long way from the spirit of the 1968 sit-in protest at Homsey College of Art, where members of The People Band played for the demonstrators. Day also lived in Paris during the turbulent days of the late 60s. With Kovitz and Hart he worked alongside Michel Portal, virtuoso reedsman with Stockhausen's ensemble, recording an improvised session for French television that was followed by a dialogue where Portal criticised Stockhausen over his distaste for jazz. Payne also spent time with Day and Kovitz in

Paris, playing with jazz musicians such as trumpeter Alan Shorter, who had worked with Marion Brown and Archie Shepp.

While some of The People Band were in Europe, others continued to perform under that name in England. Davis claims that he and Ian Jacobs formally promulgated the group's demise in London's Highgate Cemetery in February 1972, but later People Band gigs may have occurred. There had always been splinter groups growing as Day puts it, "an outlet for professional players. Holmes and Khan went as the Near Ahmad Khan Trio. Day and Kovitz performed as The Abstract Theatre Band, augmented by others including bassist Barre Phillips, percussionist Jamie Muir and poet Adrian Mitchell. Holman and Hardy played with Ian Dury on bongos. Out of that, it seems, grew Dury's rock group Kilburn And The Highroads, featuring Hardy, Day, Hart and Khan. On occasion they jammed with The People Band. Dury responded enthusiastically to Payne's vigorous playing, cementing their creative alliance. In Holland, Day, Hart and Payne played high energy music as Omms The Smooch. Their gigs began, Day enthusiastically recalls, "like the grand finale passage of a rock crescendo. Then it grew faster and faster, more and more intense – sizzling white noise that could go on for hours". Davis and Jolly formed Evans All-Weather Orchestra with bassist Tim Power. People Band energies were channelled through the group Murrays, formed around 1980 by Davis, Jolly, Hart and Jolly plus vocalist Maggie Nicols and guitarist Ed Deane. Davis, Jolly, Day and Nicols have continued to play together in the ecologically aware group Lovely. Before Day's activities were severely curtailed by illness, he left a further indelible mark in the annals of improvising with David Toop, Steve Beresford and Peter Cusack in the influential group Alterations, which shared The People Band's spirit of formal invention and stylistic inclusiveness. People Band memories often overlap but rarely match exactly. Emphases fall in different places, with some members stressing political commitment, some speaking of spiritual elevation, some gravitating to the music itself, while others mixed all three. These differing emphases elucidate the life of the group. As George Khan says, "You didn't have to subscribe to certain things to be in it." All agree that the experience furnished fantastic training in focus and sympathetic listening.

In 1989, Figgis called on People Band friends to assume the guise of The Krakow Jazz Ensemble for his film *Story Monday*. Recently he has played again with Khan, Hart and Davis, and there are plans to prepare archive People Band material for CD release. They would welcome any tapes currently collecting dust in private archives. Figgis would like to make the album available again. Payne has completed an autobiography that includes People Band material, recalling "the best years both musically and spiritually for all of us". One way or another, the unruly and sophisticated People Band are edging back into view, claiming their place in history, reaffirming belief in liberating and creative values.

"I believe we were the English equivalent to Sun Ra", proposes Payne, recalling their communal spirit. "Our attitude was similar, although we were doing our own thing. The magic of The People Band was that we weren't precious or contrived." Khan puts down their lack of contrivance to the fact that they were artists, who never had to strive self-consciously or pretentiously for Art. "All true artists break rules," declares Davis. "To do so on your own can be debilitating. We did it on an masse." □ "Part 3 from The People Band appears on the compilation *Not Necessarily 'English Music'* (Leonardo Music Journal/EMF). Davey Payne is securing a publisher for his autobiography. Plans are afoot to reassess archival recordings and create a Website: watch this space



# Charts

## Playlists from the outer limits

### Beyond Smokin' 15

**Styx**  
"Grand Illusion" from Grand Illusion (A&M)

**Supertramp**  
"Take The Long Way Home" from Breakfast In America (A&M)

**America**  
"Sundown" from America (WEA)

**Doobie Brothers**  
"Another Park, Another Sunday" from What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits (WEA)

**Gary Nardino**  
"Half A Chance" from Can I Have My Money Back (Blue Thumb)

**The Damned**  
"Hells" from Music For Pleasure (Demos)

**The Groundhogs**  
"Cherry Red" from Spirit (BGO)

**Papa**  
"Man" from Papa (Wings)

**Sparks**  
"Thanks But No Thanks" from Propaganda (Island)

**Judas Sill**  
"Jesus Was A Crossmaker" from Judas Sill (Ayleen)

**Whithouse**  
"Not Dumber" from Great White Death (Carr)

**Catherine Ribeiro & Les Alpes**  
"Liberté" (Mercury)

**Jo Jo Zee**  
"Ed Meets To Go" from Sit Down Hard (Ayleen)

**Queen**  
"Fanny Feller's Master Stroke" from Queen II (Hollywood)

**Rush**  
"La Villa Strangiata" from Hemispheres (Mercury)

Compiled by Thurston Moore and Jim O'Rourke  
for Sireno Youth

### Crap Group Names

**Bump Of Chickens**  
A Short Apnea  
Les Nipples  
The Most Sordid Place  
Age Has Killed Age  
Kibitz Thieves  
Rage Against The Coffee Machine  
God's Giftwood  
Smells Good  
Revelation Penetrations  
The Pin  
Monday Girl Oozymy  
Saper Butter Dog  
Fuch You Yankee Bluejeans  
Kinky Kids  
My Friend The Chocolate Cake  
Do As Infantly  
Sing Like Talking  
Her Majesty's Secret Ceramics  
The Privates  
Glory  
Stinky Fire Engine  
A Cat Born In An Oven Isn't A Cake  
Berlin The Sprinkler  
Stars Of The Lid

All genuine group names compiled by The Traveler

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**Carlene**  
Meet The Cultures (Dunhill)

**Mujica**  
Squashina (Carnegie)

**Vivinos**  
The Rough Guide To Bollywood (World Music Network)

**Steve Palk**  
999 Levels Of Undo (Sub-Pop)

**Don Byron**  
You Are #6 (Blue Note)

**Volepak**  
Vita Pak (Dunhill)

**Reckless Tyme**  
Live (A&M)

**Bobby Previte & Bump**  
Just Add Water (Palmrest)

**Rules**  
Hydromantigens (Tadpole)

**Art Zoyd**  
Libique (if possible)

**Dagmar Krause & Mavis Goyette**  
A Scientific Dream & A French Kiss (Renaissance)

**Hans Reichel**  
Death Of The Raw Bird (Yip YIP)

**Jak Wajtko & The Invaders Of The Heart**  
Morm Dub (3rd Hand)

**Paris Combe**  
Attraction (A&M)

Compiled by Brent Wilson, Smoke & Mirrors, Glasgow  
City Radio KEJL 88.5 FM, Greenwood, Alaska, USA,  
Monday 2:30pm, brentw@earthlink.net

### The Office Ambience

**Sonic Youth**  
Murray Close (Capricorn)

**Antio Lachry**  
Involve (Righteous Relief)

**Melvin**  
Humble Ambient Tapestry (Special)

**Patti Smith**  
Land (1975-2002) (S&W)

**Charlemagne Palestine**  
Music For Big Ears (S&W)

**Weird War**  
Weird War (Demos)

**Bloom Bip**  
Send To Sun (Lac)

**Cut Be Bat**  
Inventive Lessons (Strange Attraction)

**Pero Uto**  
SI Arkness (Sisterhouse)

**Le Tigre**  
Remains (Circle On Speed)

**Michael Prime**  
Requiem (One Star)

**Christian Kubacki/Fabrizio Pless**  
Tempo Lejacks (Ampersand)

**Nik Henric Aukun**  
18 Pieces For Organ (Sola)

**John Parish**  
How Amends Move (Third Jockey)

**Buffalo Daughter**  
I (Emperer Morton)

Compiled by The Wine Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, readers, etc. Email charts@jethere.co.uk

Charts: 10/10/01





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Aube + Jonathan Coleclough  
Osaka, Japan  
Only Connect: Sigur Rós & Hilmar Örn  
Hilmarsson/Mouse On Mars + Coll + Plaid  
London, UK  
Bios02  
Athens, Greece  
Ether Festival: Jeff Mills/People Like  
Us/Cornelius  
London, UK  
Zeitkratzer & Lou Reed  
Berlin, Germany

# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles

## VINCENT GALLO RECORDINGS OF MUSIC FOR FILMS WARP 66 CD

Note that strictly title title. Here we find not vanity project Muzak for "imaginary" films, projected by some vain muselhead Hollywood jerk-off with more friends than talent, more contacts than kudos, more photo spread profile nous than musical knowledge. There is nothing imaginary about Vincent Gallo. Still, with Gallo it's hard to disentangle myth from mystification, hubris from humor. Is he the borderline homophobic/ultra-conservative who tells a guilible style magazine that his all-time heroes are Yes bassist Chris Squire and ex-No man Richard Nixon? Or is he the earnest psychogeographer of forgotten LA independents who worships Kenneth Anger? Gallo seems to tell guilible – and powerful – interviewers exactly what they don't want to hear, on any given occasion. Which, the way things are right now, is something of a relief. We need new dreamers. And this is an archive of dreams.

Last year's *When* (also on Warp, which says something about Gallo's take on things: former Sheffield Techno outcast rather than Geffen guestlist goldpot) turned out to be one of my favourite CDs of 2001. "All music written, performed & produced by Vincent Gallo." Put together at "The University for the Development and Theory of Magnetic Tape-recorded Music Studios"; which turns out to be Gallo's Hollywood home, but in effect is Gallo-speak for Gallo's own head: the dreamspace he has marked out. The way he thinks things should be: if you love something, then do it with love. Love under will. Before he can record, he must build his own recording studio. The man is a tape delay alchemist (currently, he has the best), to match.

If you go to his Website for a peek inside the man's super ego, you'd be worried off sending fan mail – he doesn't need you to tell him he's a genius; he doesn't need you to take precious time away from the daily task of being a genius, of being sub-genius. But what you will find is a wish list of old analogue equipment: an obsessive attention to dated knowledge of...

getting it right. Materialising this... sound in his head. And this wish list, it's not just flash axes, Telecaster guitars haunting some plectrum bore who listened to too much Zappa as a nerdy kid, Gallo is fixated on microphones, cables, synths, recording equipment. Magical tools. Things to capture the aether... just so.

There is also glamour, which some (envious of his battling average?) find off-putting. The opening track on *When*, "I wrote this song for the girl pers Hilton", could be off-putting if you know this 'girl' is something like the US society equivalent of Tara Palmer Tompkinson. But the 'song' – a spacey instrumental – is a little patch of fascination, a sleepwalk pulse; and five of *When*'s tracks are likewise instrumental. Texture is his thing: oblique dreams of lost analogue transcription. Making concrete the indefinable: mood, longing, how you remember how things sounded that time. The key to *When* is that you can listen to it purely for textures alone, before focusing on any of the diastolic lyrics, delivered in Gallo's uncanny fix on blue afternoon/dark LA croon (Tim Buckley, Chet Baker). Where most macho actors want to be boogie rawk bore, Gallo wants to be something like the male Björk. A comparison I'm sure he would excoriate.

However, we shouldn't forget he's an actor – not to mention an accomplished (to say the least) liar or fabulist or mythomane, as anyone who's read his interviews will confirm. But the thing is... it all turns out to be true. He did do "x". He was 'y' 20 years before anyone else. He can, he will, he does.

Some dim reviewers appear to have dismissed *When* purely on their dislike of the Gallo vibe, just as Paul Schrader reportedly wouldn't even consider *Buffalo 66* for any kind of inaugural Sundance prize, purely on his disaffection for the young auteur: which is insane. You don't have to like him; but you have to admire the fact that he DOES what he SAYS. While all around him, culture turns into a con game of image and interview, PR and propping, he goes against the spirit of an age in which stars are celebrated for their emptiness and promises are made to be spoken but not followed through on. You get the impression he'd be doing all this anyway, and doing it his way, if his only audience

was the girlfriend du jour. Or just his own conscience, and conscientious aesthetic.

Recordings For... is both harder to access than *When* (more difficult, diffuse, dozens of moods rather than one, only one vocal track) but it will also be harder to dismiss. He's way ahead of the game – and, here's the thing, has been for years. These recordings represent nearly 20 years of lo-fi ambition work: from his very first short film, *If You Feel Froggy*, jump, in 1979, to *Buffalo 66* in 1998. There are 29 tracks. An hour plus. This is an archive of real work.

29 tracks and barely a repetition. Capsule summary? Think the *Eno of Another Green World*, except less sleek, not so coy, sieved through the more recent klang and crust of Indie USA: Sonic Youth, Royal Trux B sides, latterday Fahey. He avoids the obvious: his sense of outsider 'adventure' closer to some lost 1970s Inoué release than any Red Hot Chili Pepper. This is an archive of flickers and ghosts and weather probes, each track a different exploration of instrumental tone and texture. He can do Ojango glass; he can do feedback ache. He can do Industrial hum. Little dark polaroids of gnomic memory music. Is that portrait completed with a zither? Is that distant best vaguely Native American? Gallo is like Ry Cooder on a tattered baseball shoe budget... but with Gallo playing all the parts, rather than importing some octogenarian Spanish guitarist, or blowing the budget on a sunnyday field recording. The often ragged, murky, basement taped quality makes for quietly gripping sonic relief – with no unnecessary flash, or undue flourish, just prickly clips, gnarly cuttings, splices and immersions. (Sometimes the recording hiss is louder than the squeaks, squawks and guitar caresses.) Its aggrieved melancholy is set out with such palette and patience it transmutes into a kind of desperate affirmation. (Fail. Fail better. Love. Love more. Lose. Lose more.) "I Think The Sun Is Coming Out Now"; his final word. Maybe, just maybe, he is everything he says he is: desperately sincere.

This is an archive of almost forgotten dreams, with Gallo as his own Harry Smith. This is an archive of surprises. And one of the surprises of the year. □

**Stinking up trails from Harry Smith to Brian Eno, the *Buffalo 66* director, star and composer might well be the Renaissance genius he says he is. By Ian Penman**



## AKUFEN MY WAY

FORGE INC. FRM060 CD  
BY KEIN HOLLINGS

Morrel's Marc Leclerc has one idea, but it's a subtle one and he knows how to work it. When he wakes up every morning, he surfs the airwaves on his lutes and ashbore recorders, collecting these minute splinters of sound as the needle moves from station to station in a process he refers to as "microsampling." This is the sound of dead radio dancing, conversational music that's drifted off channel but still needs the feel of a beat. Voices, uttered to the most whisper of a phoneme whether spoken or sung, acoustic guitars no longer attached to a tune, faint slices of string arrangements are processed together into elegantly funky lones, like iron filings swirling and circling around the lines of force in a magnetic field. Steady four to the floor Techno rhythms help to prevent the whole thing from whirling off into shards of electrostatic debris, while the glorious transition in volume, from the electrostatic haze contained in radio's quiet broadcast moments to the wild, pumped-up flash of the discolor, gives each composition an extra edge.

Backs such as "In Dog We Trust" and "Keep See" feel like assembled dust fragments from an old Bowie's *Radio* and *Never* session, while opener "Ears White Noises" has a soulful expansive flow to it. With each piece given generous running time to realize itself, the strongest impression is of everything being thought through, carefully recorded and reworked. This is sharp, surprising stuff. Just don't snap your neck while dancing to it. Those double-takes can really hurt after a while.

## CLARENCE BARLOW ...UNTIL...

LOS ANGELES RIVER LAL212 CD  
BY PHILIP CLARK

Clarence Barlow's music both teased and amazed at last year's *Horton New Music Days*, leaving people with scratched notebooks and very smug. His premise is that so-called "contemporary music" is simply a genre, and he is as likely to draw on his love of handwriting as on the classical tradition. He also has a fascination for linguistic puns and rewording mathematical logic. If you say the title of his 1986 piece *The Spriglit The Diner By No Wytter* very quickly it sounds like something obscene in German, while his business card spells his name "Clarence Barlow" and most extraordinarily "Clarence Barlow".

One of his prime aims recently has been to prick Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Autos* *Fantasia Quasi Una Sonata* gratis itself on top of Stockhausen's *Intima*, replacing that piece's careful melodic and harmonic schemata with a journey from good old G minor through chromaticism and only then to serial and chance procedures. Stockhausen responded to the piece via his legal department, much to Barlow's delight.

At only 33 minutes, you've got to be pretty damned sure you're out... *Just*... but it's a playful dig at its own right. The score exists as a set of instructions and a riddle of notes that are initially highly consonant to a given drone, and this recording offers three realizations for piano, piccolo and guitar each with a character of its

own. As Barlow transposes the pitches, the cycle rises increasingly against the drone until, in a final punchline, the drone itself shifts up a tone. The theory might not sound particularly compelling, but as an intellectual game it's every bit as engaging as Escher's neverending staircases, or the twists of T.S. Eliot's *Blink*.

The piccolo version is best. Here Barlow's pitches become flirtatious, the distorted piano tone of the piccolo sounding like the low cry of Los Angeles and Eugene Chaboussou. As the cycle of notes moves further away from the orbit of the drone, internal harmonic interference is created and the music, to coin Ornette Coleman's phrase, dances in your head. The piano takes a brief and very loud, while the guitar reading flourishes over 10 minutes. With some strings tuned microtonally, it gently shifts from an unambiguous A minor to a hairy hinterland between tonality and microtonality, until the drone rises and the music just stops.

## HAN BENNIK & EVAN PARKER THE GRASS IS GREENER

LOS ANGELES CD  
BY JULIAN CONLEY

The tightly channelled energy which gives impetus to Evan Parker's tenacious saxophone notes is so frequently recorded a force from subtle percussion patterns, such as John Stevens and Paul Lytton. But, although they both participated in Peter Brötzmann's frenetic classic *Machine Gun* (1980), Parker and Dutch drummer Han Bennik have rarely been heard on record together. Their individual approaches to improvising are very different: Parker closely focused on an evolving, internally coherent stream of sound; Bennik unruly and theatrical, an immensely powerful drummer, deliberately determined to beat a soaked plot. The cover photographs sum it up: Parker looms out, dark and determined; Bennik in the background, *Mighty* gaze in mouth, looking sideways with a glint of mischievous intent or eyes closed, hard raised in a gesture of demand, wrapped up in his own game.

In practice, *The Grass Is Greener* works very well as these disparate sensibilities find suitable points of connection and tension. Parker knows what to expect from Bennik, of course: tumbling, discontinuous flames; fantastic lurches into impenetrable time-playing; oblique descents into heavily pregnant silence; solitary depthcharges placed with quirky brilliance; stylistic postures; sporadic yelps of approval and delight. The saxophonist says for his tense, a better match than the soprano for Bennik's exuberance. Yet the drummer proves once again that he is a great listener as well as a showman. If he loves to subvert and digress, he can also lock in to a situation as tightly as any improviser. He can also create wonderfully imaginative contours, finding ways to divide up time and vice versa that would elude most percussionists. Meanwhile, his punctuation of Parker's phrasing finds the right spot with telepathic accuracy.

A new track makes the end of the concluding track continuous with the start of the opener, like "the answer" of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. At a sudden, the infinity symbol in Bennik's cover art threatens to sentence Han and Evan to an endless cycle of instant composing. On the evidence, they're game for it.

## TIM BERNÉ & THE COPENHAGEN ART ENSEMBLE OPEN, COMA

SCHWENK SCREW010 CD  
BY TIM BERNÉ

## TIM BERNÉ QUARTET SCIENCE FRICTION

SCHWENK SCREW010 CD  
BY TIM BERNÉ

Tim Berné's *Screwgun* label has undergone a makeover. The oddly drilled brown cardboard covers have been replaced with black card stock, full color Stephen Byram artwork and a functional octagonal hole to set the CDs. The only downside is the absence of maps for auditory evocation. Like the *Atom* Jack, which all but guaranteed a party when a new *Screwgun* arrived. More seriously, the label's style change could be symbolizing the deepening economic downturn in the music industry. Perhaps that's why Berné is reviving up *Screwgun* after he had seemingly found a compatible label in *Thirsty Ear*. His new albums continue the *Screwgun* tradition of raucous energy and twisted humour.

In varying degrees, the *Science Friction* and the *Open, Coma* double CD extend his exploration of long, multi-section works — for instance, the latter sets four pieces each clock in at 30 minutes or longer — and ignored, ironic nods to swirling guitars. While guitarist Marc Duvert goes the ensemble sound of the late saxophonist's 2001 *Thirsty Ear* debut (and swan song?) *The Shell Game*, with keyboardist Craig Laborn and drummer Ben Riley, the changes are incremental compared to what happens to Berné's lengthy works when the ensemble is bulked up to a baker's dozen.

On *Open, Coma*, his ensembles have an orchestral gravitas yet maintain the sketch-like quality of his of small group writing, essential to the flow of pieces running to this length. Berné is particularly droll at letting them swoop to the foreground while improvised statements are gathering steam — check the plaintive: these enveloping trumpet Herb Robertson's smarmy solo at the outset of the exemplary "Eye Contact". The dissipation of these materials opens a new, comely field for improvisation, providing a context of expression with a structural elpitude eventually borne furthest by his austerely idiosyncratic joy stylings and less into "Eye Contact". Signalled by guitarist Marc Duvert and drummer Anders Mogensen's raucous drat, he stacks warped funk riffs, which kick up a cloud of noise when they crash. Both in these most madcap moments and their ramshackle aftermaths, the Art Ensemble of Copenhagen meet the demands of Berné's music, contributing greatly to a mischievous recording in the saxophonist's career.

Incidentally, the quartet disc *Science Friction* is overshadowed by its achievement, even though it's a typically smart, edgy and fulfilling Berné album. It's a set of relatively compact pieces spanning M-Bayes funk and atmospheric textures, with David Torn's post-production giving Tarn's keyboards added smoky indecency, while undercooking Duvert's tenor and fennec.

## BIOSPHERE SHENZHOU

BY JEROME MAUNIEL

Jeru Jensen aka Biosphere often appears to need a creative cue, if not a concept, to kickstart

an album. One inspiration for the glacial textures of his first set for Touch, *Coma* (2000) was the story of the ill-fated Chris McCandless, who hitchhiked to Alaska in April 1992, skimped on his food supply and was found dead four months later. Last year, Touch also released his 1997 quiet classic, *Substrata*, in a lavishly packaged, remastered and expanded version, which came out of a swirling trip he made in the Himalayas. But, from the great outdoors, a French composer scored his latest album, *Shenrouh*, the first ten tracks, confess the minimal pleasures, were inspired by the orchestral works of Claude Debussy.

It's a testament to Jensen that throughout the set Debussy's influence is always felt explicitly, even as it never threatens to overwhelm the production as a whole. The classical source material is frozen, sampled and looped, like an audio Polaroid, into short one- or two-bar segments of woodwind, strings and the occasional harp. These central motifs, repeated memorably from the bedrock of a series of lovingly crafted atmospheres and zones, around which Jensen pumps dense clouds of beatless ambience, sinuously rumbling bass notes and endlessly shifting, impressionistic textures. Similar but never the same, the effect, over expanding repetitions, is like watching the infinite variations of apples in *Forrest*.

Jensen's old records in *Forrest*, 30 miles inside the Arctic Circle on the northern coast of Norway. No surprise, then, that critics astutely picked up on the "loneness" of the sound of the albums he made for R&S offshoot Apollo in the early 90s. On this showing, though, the overall feel is more pastoral and warm, a quality lifted in to track titles like "pathleadingtothehighground" and "greenreflections", and the CD artwork's photos of leaves, water, skies. Farly due to the disc's classical sound palette, perhaps, the rustic imagery makes more sense here than on other recent "folky" electronic releases. If the textures of *Shenrouh* can't exactly grab the attention, they do mirror the natural world with unusual subtlety.

## BLEVIN BLETCUM TALON SALAM

DELUXE, DUNO12 CD  
BY JOHN MULLVEY

If some of Blecum from Blechman's music appears to be conducted in a private language, this solo album from the Blewin hall in San Francisco's Ars Electronica programming does more convincing still. In the middle of "The Way The Cooke Crumbles Straight From The Horse's Mouth", a vocal sample constantly whispers, "My vision is clear" to a point of insane delirium. Blewin's vision, however, is anything but. *Talon Salam* is ostensibly the soundtrack to a film of the same name by Ryan Jettell, starring herself and Mufson's Drew Daniel. But it's also the statement of a conundrum: a music of desire and furtive complexity that seems designed to reflect the most hyperactive and unmediated workings of body and mind. The slurs are a living thing just as we are and has a soul as we do. She writes, mapping out her erstwhile metaphor and virtual begging for her album to be evaluated as a heavily ingrained, obstacle-laden mess.

Which, in the best possible way, it is. If the Bay Area set's dominant planktonism sometimes

## Soundcheck

comes across as a means to debunk critical pretensions, it also has a conceptual core that helps bolster them. So too with John Sloman. His 19 tracks of violently hand-drawn and stretched scope and samples propose laptop music as both intellectual territory and sincere statement. The overt sociology of Bleatman from Bleatman, as manifest in their playground songlines, might be a shock, but the squeal, suction and gurgle remain. Instead of communicating, with Kevin Bazany's music it often sounds as if it's predominantly listening the internal. The exceptional lines of "Upright Locked Down" and "Preserving Machine #2" are a kind of biological process music, a deep probe to maintain the operating room investigations of Rabinowitz's A Chance to Cut Is A Chance To Cure.

But, of all her West Coast contemporaries, John Sloman most resembles the music of J. Lessner — no coincidence, perhaps, that four pieces here are dedicated to him. Yet the prevailing mood is one of inquisitiveness rather than sarcasm or brutality indeed, the tiny, glided melodies that occasionally emerge from the maze of crashing sound files are things of wonder rather than irony.

More twists than an intestine, then, and an album that acknowledges the spleen as much as it does the heart.

### CORNELIUS CARDEW WE SING FOR THE FUTURE! NEW ALBUM NAL 15 10 CD

### LOU HARRISON COMPLETE HARPISCHORD WORKS NEW ALBUM NAL 17 10 CD BY PHILIP CLARK

Recent works for solo piano like Richard Barrett's *Post* and Helmut Lachenmann's *Seynoid* (reviewed in *The Wire* 212) are a kind of Minimalist critique of the piano's bourgeois status in classical music circles. Barrett treats the piano as a useless, obsolete lump of wood that must somehow be dragged into the aesthetic and technical territory of his own experience before he can authentically express himself. The piano can't provide the music's integral to his language, nor can the pianist, who after all only has two hands, inside in the masses of mutually independent layers that give his music its edge and tension.

Such thoughts are nothing new. The notational innovations of Charles Ives and Michael Finnissy have largely grown out of the problem of

combining so many different strands, and in very different ways the radical voices of Lou Harrison and Cornelius Cardew have made the piano into a vehicle for political comment and protest. Cardew's problem with the piano is the weight of its tradition, while Harrison's difficulty is more basic — he objects to the way it is tuned. Since the 18th century, "equal temperament" has falsely manipulated the distance between chromatic intervals to smooth out the rough edges that result from the natural harmonic series. Harrison thinks this is akin to social control, with the same sort of harmonization that historically denied him the freedom to practise his own sexual orientation. As a consequence, he's interested in using natural tuning systems to "turn pieces in ways that are fitting, appropriate or [that] enhance musical beauty".

Harrison's fascination with the relationship between language and society is woven into the fabric of the shimmering score he wrote for Cardew's classic *Baroque Play*, *Cenae*, in 1957. Concerned with power inequalities and strategy, his score implies the play's stratification of society through a shifting landscape of natural textures that become characters in themselves. Cardew's are compromised by their "strong" nearly always sounding strongly flawed. Melody lines rebel against their harmonic accompaniment, while his overtones occasionally suggest a society whose aspirations were false all along. The early works included here, *Village Music* (1941–46) and *Six Sonatas for Cornelia* (1943), show a timeless keyboard style that Bach would have recognised with the obsessive repeating patterns and tunings of gamelan music. The tortured *Thophony* from 1945 was written when Harrison was entering a "spiritual and emotional crisis". Correspondingly, his distorted tunings make its seemingly infinite lines feel alienated and bleak. In contrast, the *Sonata for Harpsichord* from 1959 radiates joy and dances its way to an affirmative and energetic conclusion. The piece was written especially for Linda Burman-Hall who plays all these works as if her life depended on it.

The ironic context of Cornelius Cardew's late piano music is more of a minefield. After his revolutionary questioning of the function of musical text in *Teatime* and *The Great Learning*, his return to traditional notation must have come as a shock to his followers. The pulled up Romantic language he created was a knowing concept designed to appeal to a non-specialist

audience, while throwing the musical establishment into aesthetic freefall. Parrest Frederic Rzewski, himself a provocative thinker and composer, gets Cardew, allowing his music to speak with ideologic eloquence. *We Sing For The Future!* takes its material from a song designed by Max Lieke that as a poem to Maoist/Leninist thought. Cardew confronts the political pomposity with real optimism, something highlighted by Rzewski's profound sense of forward momentum. His performance comes complete with two improvised cadenzas that hark back to a very old fashioned sort of pianistic virtuosity. Like Cardew's original concept, these cadenzas are genuine folkies, an odd amalgam of the anachronistic and the highly esoteric.

Cardew wrote Tholmann Variations in 1974 to mark the death of Ernst Tholmann, Secretary of the German Communist Party. The piece exists in the world once removed of Beethoven's late piano sonatas and Sir Symphonic. Overarching statements are shaped from tiny fragments of material into a dazzling collection of structural surprises and startling melodic bombshells. The political dogma that led the work may seem like a relic now, but the music itself expresses something more thoughtful and charming. And even if you disagree, this disc is worth sampling for the brilliant rhythmic and textural subtleties of Frederic Rzewski's piano playing.

### KIM CASONE DUST THEORIES C04 004 CD

### AMNON WOLMAN DANGEROUS BEND C04 003 CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

The Max/MSP software used on these recordings by Kim Cascone and Amnon Wolman is a product of the San Francisco company Cycling 74, whose label issued both CDs. However, any suspicion that they're little more than demonstration discs are swiftly allayed, particularly since the albums have almost nothing in common.

First, they're not too surprising. Cascone, though well-known as anyone he adopts, while writing programs that factor in misbehavior and various degrees of indeterminacy. Since 1998 his music has shifted away from the margins of minimalism, Ambient and Techno, with their different yet often predictable ways of measuring time, and into

more abstract and enigmatic realms. The two part title track, lasting 40 minutes, consists of several discrete electronic modules presented simultaneously. There's no narrative to guide the listener, and no discernible relationship between the modules. Some of them, even, others do not. Cascone claims that this allows listeners to "aurally multitask", struts themselves in the audio information in a variety of ways, sort of like a mix of some *Culture* and *Futura*. It's an accurate description of how *Dust Theories* operates, as well as how to get the best out of it. The much shorter *Edgeboundness 123* gets two remans. Ben Neive's banal beats squish Cascone's delicate microsound on one, but the approach taken by DJ 4337 is more subtle: slow-moving blades of sound become suggestive of an underwater seismic event. His use of Cascone's material succeeds admirably, but the CD's principal attraction is the host's strange and remarkable title track.

*Dangerous Bend* is the future of music as described on Brian Eno's *On Land*. It has that golden shimmer below of electronics. Images one sheet of steel being dragged across another, and the jagged waveform this produces smoothed to an audio carcase. Imagine petrified Marlowe. The music is abstract, surprising, charged with metaphor, thus dimensional detail. Wolman's transformative processes so disguise the sound of Anton Lukoszevski's cello that even the physical gesture is eradicated, and the track dense of its instrument becomes apparent only during the closing moments, as the electronics take out.

The track titles denote traffic signs, and, who knows, maybe Wolman used the symbols as compositional determinants. But the sleeve photograph tells a different story. A flat stretch of road hugging the foreground is dominated by massive stone clouds, and the whip-like funnel of a tornado swirls horizontally across the sky before plunging to earth. This suggests a rather more elemental take on the CD title. It also better reflects the nature of the music.

### CERAMIC HOBBS STRAIGHT OUTTA RAMPTON PUMP 397 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Operating from Blackpool, Pam's catalogue mainly consists of Stan Satoz's photocopied comics and 60 minute cassette by the likes of Howl in *The Typewriter*, Judge Mental & The Heavy Dread Beat, Sooty Grouse Castleson Squad and

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## Rising from the rubble of Manhattan, Sonic Youth's latest sound flux pulls together 70s riffs, free jazz licks and rock concrète. By Edwin Pouncey



Radical edits: Sonic Youth

### SONIC YOUTH MURRAY STREET

GEFFEN 4932192 CDS/SMELLS LIKE 199 LP

A lot of dust has blown under the Brooklyn Bridge since last August, when Sonic Youth first began work on this, their 16th album, at their studio on Murray Street in lower Manhattan. As we are all now too painfully aware, the world was turned upside down on 11 September the following month. An engine from one of the planes involved in the deadly assault on the World Trade Center landed in Murray Street. As a result the entire area was cordoned off, including Sonic Youth's HQ, where their instruments and master tapes were stored. When they finally got back into the studio they discovered that, apart from everything being covered in dust, it was still in one piece. But because no civilian vehicles were allowed within the Ground Zero zone, they had to hump their gear out onto the street and past the barricades before they could continue work on the album. When the planes hit, Jim O'Rourke was sleeping in the Murray Street studio and reportedly found himself running for safety as the towers collapsed behind him. No surprise then, that these events are subtly etched into the mood of the group's latest album, the second of a "proposed trilogy about the cultural history of lower Manhattan" which they began in 2000 with NYC Ghosts & Flowers.

Like chancing upon some seemingly unreadable 60s psychedelic concert poster that initially looks like a mass of flashing colours and dripping graphics, Murray

Street takes time to decipher in order to fully extract, understand and enjoy the information it contains. Sonic Youth have made a joyful return to their No Wave hardcore rock roots with a vibrating set of muscular songs which glide effortlessly from Goopy power pop to full on guttarmageddon meltdown, souled out psychedelia and beyond. The "beyond" element is provided by Jim O'Rourke, whose role is more immediately evident here than on NYC Ghosts. Obviously O'Rourke taking over bass allows Kim Gordon to join Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo in a three-guitar frontline. But it is his electronic presence that adds an extra spark of invention to Sonic Youth's sound which, for all the right reasons, is here anchored to a 70s rock vibe. Over the carefully constructed guitar harmonies on the loopy, cascading "Disconnection Notice", O'Rourke lays the static squalling of a soulless Internet connection persistently failing to find its server – an apt non-instrumental addition to a song that others volumes about the alienation, frustration and loneliness of communication breakdown in the 21st century.

A similar, more complex device is fitted into the main section of "Karen Revisited", an experimental rock concrète piece that recalls Tom Constanten's electronic contribution to The Grateful Dead's "That's It For The Other One" suite from their Anthem Of The Sun album. The Dead reference is reinforced by the blending of studio and live material within the song to produce a strobing, kaleidoscopic swirl of drifting, amplified orchestration that ebbs away with delicately

stroked guitar strings lapping over Steve Shelley's devious drum shuffling, before ending with muted crowd applause. The addition of monster sax duo Dan Dietrich and Jim Sauter of Borbetomagus to "Radical Adults Lick Godhead Style" is another touch of twisted genius, diverting the sound of the group down a more hazardous route. At its height Borbetomagus's blaring, all consuming twin horn attack threatens to engulf Sonic Youth's clanging guitar chorus, as they fiercely strive to be heard over Dietrich and Sauter's ecstatic free jazz gale.

Equally potent, though, is the album's introduction of a spiky pop element, as manifest in Thurston Moore's laconic, but intoxicating vocal on "The Empty Page" and Kim Gordon's feline, punky snarl on "Plastic Sun", which precedes the album's grand finale, "Sympathy For The Strawberry". If it's not as intense as the floor-rappling build-up of "Ran On Tin" earlier on in the program, its impact is just as powerful. "Sympathy For The Strawberry" delivers a more subtle sting closer in spirit to the meditative celebration of an exemplary life that is A Thousand Leaves's "Hits Of Sunshine (For Allen Ginsberg)" than, say, the disintegrating orgasm of EVOL's "Expressway To Yr Skull". Murray Street can proudly take its place alongside those exceptional recordings. More importantly, this latest shows that, even when it looks like the entire world is on the brink of obliteration, great art will always endure. From out of the dust, debris and rubble Sonic Youth have risen, offering up their brave new sound of tomorrow. □

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RULES!

Job Finder & The Mental Cruelty. This lavish CD – silver underside, colour printed cover – might make Ceramic Hobs the label's flagship act, but it still sells for a mere five. The Hobs' previous release was *Psychiatric Underground* (Pam 322), a late 90s retrospective including their collaborations with Ramleh and Michael Youngs. Straight Outta Hampson is a tapestry of the group's loopy tales and parables, weaving found tapes, media soundbytes and crumpled samples through a catchy set of garage rock riffs.

Although it arrives packaged in a leopardskin of 'bad' design and scribble, a record like this wants you to inhabit it, to write it repeatedly, to weave its jokes and allusions. It thus stands in the opposite corner from live improvisation's arty sense of singalong event – a strategy adopted in much American avant rock – even if the Hobs have a parallel belief that noise and surprise can wake up listeners hypnotised by the discourse of power. Coming on like punk George Clinton, they disdain the alienation of minimalism, which exerts such a spell over Noise and Ambient. The booklet is stuffed with disfigured newspaper photographs, graffiti and plundered texts (Charles Kingsley's *Motestudies* is one source), along with hand drawn maps of the source materials of each song. This makes their recombinatorialism of Chic, Oasis, Ram Shankar, Stewart Home and BBC Radio Lancashire seem less like random postmodernism and more like motivated collage.

Amidst the sarcasm and looniness, the Hobs' trump card is a punk fearlessness about expression. When they cover a song by Deck Boggs, their singer's cracked vocal brilliantly confirms the equation between old timey and punk made by the Revenant label. The vocal falsetto and rhythmic shuffle of 'The Prowler' is effective 'fall in love with me' pop. The Hobs may recite nasty texts about sex murders, but you know they're really *The Incredible String Band* for a world that has discovered Mark Stewart and 'Arab World' from 'Arab World Ales' their politics – rabid arabno-punkism – tries off more than it can chew, appearing to bind them in the impossible, but the act of shared absurdity and cat-on-a-hot-potato persons one getting indignant. Ceramic Hobs' sweet things in a better belief world.

## DON CHERRY LIVE AT THE BRACKNELL JAZZ FESTIVAL, 1986

BBC JAZZ LEGENDS BRCC00549 CD  
BY PHILIP CLARK

Don Cherry's UK toured the UK in 1986-87 under the auspices of the Contemporary Music Network. By 1987, drummer Ed Blackwell was in obvious ill-health and I vaguely remember him disappearing from the stage before the end of their Newcastle concert, leaving the percussion duties to Nana Vasconcelos. A year earlier, and this fine set captures Cherry, Blackwell, Vasconcelos, saxophonist Carlos Ward and bassist Mark Hobbs in exuberant form dispensing a cogently constructed blend of post-Ornette harmonies fused with the eclectic pan-African agenda that Cherry would develop in *Multifunk* a few years later.

The set opens with 'Lilo', a vast riff based piece with a satisfying patchwork structure Carlos Ward introduces the riff with the magisterial roar of Johnny Hodges; and Cherry

scampers above him, his diminutive pocket trumpet punching above its weight. His multi-dimensional solo issues cascades of racially farfetched, *disintegrating* into busy silences and shattered forms, at once beautifully logical and errantly impulsive. Ward's own improvisations are less personal and more musically correct, but he's a sympathetic foil.

The two Ornette Coleman themes, 'Chapel Choppen' and 'Traffic', can only emphasise the limitations of Ward's approach, but his ensemble playing is exemplary and Ornette's themes effervesce with energy. Hearing Cherry and Blackwell revive the rhythmic tilt they invented in the late 1950s accentuates the extent to which it has become part of the lingua franca of jazz discourse.

The uncanny echo chamber effects at the start of Nana Vasconcelos's feature 'O Benboub' are so much of their time (1986), but more muscular face loads directly into Ward's composition, 'Unlimited'. Here Cherry becomes transformed into a Miles Davis fan, the phrasing and general demeanour of his long solo recalling the Miles of 'Workin' and Cookin'. Helms's 'Lumbo' and the throwaway encore 'Mopli', which Cherry leads from the piano, have an enthusiastic audience content and fulfilled.

## CUL DE SAC IMMORTALITY LESSONS

STRANGE ATTRACTORS AUDIO HOUSE  
SAAH-007 CD

BY DAVID KIRKMAN

Cul De Sac's reworking of expressive rhythms through expansive modal textures, heavily delayed Hawaiian guitar and amorphous clouds of streaming electronics left ahead of the game when they emerged in 1992. A taught 1997 collaboration with the late John Finley notwithstanding, the rest of their decade was decidedly sloppy, meaning *Immortality Lessons* comes out of nowhere like a shot in the head. In truth, it's from an impromptu live session beautifully if haphazardly recorded by Massachusetts' WEBS radio. Guided by Glenn Jones's delectable, more-or-less real Cul De Sac being crammed into a tiny booth on a blazing hot day angling amongst themselves, as the blast radio staff looked on. When it was over, everyone inevitably declared it a disaster.

When they played back the tapes, however, something unaccountable had happened. The sound was glorious, spacious and clear, while the looseness of their playing had opened extra-dimensional spaces in their material. *Immortality Lessons* could be the ultimate Cul De Sac document. Its sprawling, notatop performance segues the enigmatic, reverberant analogue of 'Eaton Without Strife' and the title track (originally cut with Finley but omitted from this album collaboration), with the corseted tape manipulation of 'Lullaby' and the gentle comedown of 'Bliss in E', with Jones's guitar showing snowflake flumes of notes onto the creaking depths of Michael Bloom's bass.

Right now Cul De Sac are making their way across America as Dano Sunk's backing group. The pairing might make it easier to join the dots between Can's obsessive rhythmic jamming and Cul De Sac's whirpool contrails, but the sense of boundless dimensional space in Cul De Sac's music is no one else's but their own.

## THE DEAD C NEW ELECTRIC MUSIC LANGUAGE THREE CD

### BRUCE RUSSELL PAINTING THE PASSPORTS BROWN

SCARLETT HISTORICUM HERMES GAS CD

BY BRIAN GUGUDD

Ah, what the Dead C could do if they only tried a little harder. New Zealand's favourite lo-fi anti-slackers have a knack for creating music that's shambolic but charming – and that stands for their latest album *New Electric Music* – when it's clear that they could have nailed the likes of Sonic Youth if they only could be bothered.

Opening with a subdued – to the point of being dead – ambience through electric guitar hum, *New Electric Music* brings together influences from free jazz, drone rock and lo-fi noise into a whole that's never less than agreeable, if only very intermittently exhilarating. And, frankly, it's music that astounds that I'm looking for 'Rash' offers a combination of ramshackle-stomached guitar grind with aimless free jazz squeals. 'Reputation' is a considerably more satisfying blend of awaying electricity and shivery syncretic play, while 'Stance' swerves from quiet dissection into an angry thrash dance. They also offer up a perfectly lustrous half-hour exploration of mythic industrial noise, with few surprises. I found it all somewhat disheartening, but I am possibly disingenuous.

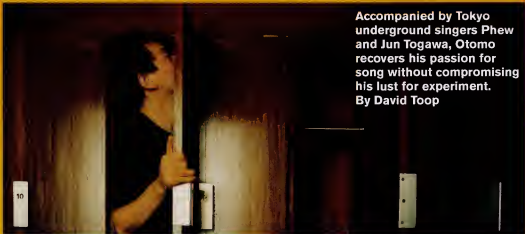
Russell's latest solo effort offers three different combinations of unprovoked, grumbling electric guitar scuzz and taped noise, and is far better. The music's like a form of shambolic brass-rubbing, teasing scrapes, means and drones from the instrument into vague, indistinct soundscapes: 'Black Flies #1' and 'With Reinhold in Abyssinia (As Backwards)' are at their best when dominated by mournful lines of feedback, occasionally breaking out into great electric shudders, headless waves pummeling a forum shos. The former is the highlight of the album, turning gritty redoubtable vibration into a seductive power dance, like a faulty air conditioning unit accidentally hooked up to the National Grid. There's far less formalist approach on 'Black Flies #2', whose squeals and soft rumbles emerge from a laggid backdrop. Ghosts in an abandoned power station, perhaps. The simplicity and sense of restraint provides the most successful music.

## EKKEHARD EHLERS

STAUOLDIG 30 CD

BY MATT FIFFICHE

This CD gathers together the five mini-albums and singles, first released by the Stauoldig and Bittrop-Bay labels, that comprise the Ekkehard Ehlers Plays series. What Ehlers plays here, however, are not instruments but people: German poet Hubert Fichte, pioneering American independent film maker and actor John Cassavetes, plus the musician/composers Cornelius, Charles, Albert Ayler and Robert Johnson. But how exactly does he 'play' them? His intention, he has said, is 'not to sample, but to refer to historic places and figures'. German critic Dierck Diederichsen glosses this in the notes (in German) originally included with the vinyl. Plays Albert Ayler? We live in a time when the ability to sample culture has not only



Closest neighbor: Otomo Yoshihide

# OTOMO YOSHIHIDE'S NEW JAZZ ENSEMBLE

IZADOK 127238 CD

A world without songs. There are times when the so-called cutting edge promises exactly that, yet what a grim prospect. Throughout the history of free improvisation there has been an oblique, elusive yet persistent relationship between song and the outer limits of instrumental music created in the moment. Think of John Coltrane's epic assault on "My Favorite Things", Willem Breuker's theatre music of the late 1960s, the solos and ensemble work of players such as Peter Brötzmann, Maggie Nicols, Malte Mangelberg, Shelley Hirsch, Steve Beresford, Phil Minton, Taku Sugimoto and Lol Coxhill, the links between AMM and The Scratch Orchestra, Roger Turner's work with Annette Peacock, Derek Bailey's *Balade* CD, or the rapidly oscillating dialogue between structure and its dismantled double in John Zorn's music. Alternatively, think of the examples of songs in which improvisation menaces or ruptures the boundaries that make a lyric, or a repeating form, into a recognizable object for the memory.

Otomo Yoshihide is young enough to have adopted, then escaped the sectarianism that haunted European improvisation in the 1970s, yet mature enough to accept that song and improv are problematic siblings. In the sleeve notes of his recently reissued *Ground Zero* album, *Plays Standards*, he recalls the moment when hearing records by Victor Jara and Mercedes Sosa for the first time awakened a passion for song that he assumed had been lost. The confrontational intensity of that album makes a fascinating contrast with Yoshihide *Otomo Plays The Music Of Takeo Yamashita* and *Cathode*, both recorded a few years later. The organic development of his turntable skills into an individual talent for orchestration hits a high on those records. Nobody else quite achieves his particular balance of brulish physicality, refinement and strange invention.

Two tracks on the Takeo Yamashita homage featured Novo Tono, the group Otomo used to share

with Tokyo singer Phew, and she returns in the more closely scrutinised, less referential context of *Dreams*. The other featured vocalist is Jun Togawa, once described in *Nadir* magazine by John Zorn as "[one of] the few artists in the world whose career is one of growth, where you can see them learning, getting better and better with each album". The title, the anachronistic musical styles and the complex emotional tenor of this little song cycle all carry implications of cinema. Forget the cliché of music for a non-existent film in your head; these are songs begging for embodiment through celluloid. The opening track, "Preach", begins as a duet between Otomo's guitar chords and Jun Togawa's naked vocal, recorded in extreme close-up. With the entry of Kikuchi Natsuyoshi's deliciously vaudevilian horn charts and Yasuhiro Yoshigaki's marching band snare rolls, "Preach" opens up memories of Brecht and Weill, even Carla Bley. Flickering behind moving edges, the luminous glow of Masuko Tatsuki's electronic keyboards adds images of circus dreams to this theatre of ghosts.

"Yume" is a poignant ballad on which Phew sounds simultaneously childlike and ancient, vulnerable yet indomitable. Her torch-song voice picks its way through an arrangement that burns on a slow fuse, Otomo's wah-wah guitar and Sachiko M's sinewave, a pedal note for dogs and dolphins, countering any false notion of historical authenticity. This is jazz informed by the past but not imprisoned by it; as much Donald and Albert Ayler's conception of ensemble counterpoint or the wayward harmonies of an Ornette Coleman ballad as a genuine love for the soft sheared tonal beauty of a Don Byas or Lucky Thompson. Like most of the songs on *Dreams*, "Good Morning" grows out of Otomo's guitar, this time a simple, unadorned alternation of G major to C major, Kenta Tsugami's alto sax, Natsuyoshi Kikuchi's tenor and Yasuhiro Yoshigaki's trumpet weaving drunken numinations around his sober center. Even without understanding Phew's words, her delivery is hugely affecting. In its grownup innocence.

"Teinen Pushiganga" takes us back to the moment

Accompanied by Tokyo underground singers Phew and Jun Togawa, Otomo recovers his passion for song without compromising his lust for experiment. By David Toop

when Otomo heard records by Victor Jara and Mercedes Sosa and experienced a reawakening. Strummed acoustic guitar and bodhran sound positively Andean, like the intro to an Irit Ilfman song, though the panpipes are replaced by Phew's declamatory vocal and a free jazz interlude. Opening with funeral drumming, bleeps and sinewaves, "Toi Hibiki" could be 21st century Gagaku, but detours sharply - a gorgeous meandering lament, hints of rock 'n' roll in its chord progression, a plaintive drone of electronics and saxophone, the steady ascent of a typically Japanese horn arrangement - then finally back to Phew and the song. Absolutely spellbinding.

Track six is an episodic journey through Jim O'Rourke's "Eureka", with words by Phew and vocals by the two singers. In a middle section so intimate it feels like a violation, Jun Togawa sings, almost speaks in a gentle murmur, every syllable a caress, the soft pat of lips and tongue echoed by Yasuhiro Yoshigaki's trumpet growl and wail (a pre- and post-bop sound, from Bubber Miles to Don Cherry in its earthiness). A lo-fi landscape of sea and wind sounds from Hiroshi Ando's film *Blue* breaks the continuity, dropping out abruptly to leave only the thin reed of Sachiko's sinewave. In the final section, bassist Hiroaki Mizutani plays beautifully underneath a turbulent, yearning horn part that reminds me of the way John Tchicai and Richard Abrams once used magisterial horn ensembles to state melody.

The final track is the headlong rush of "Haisen Fukei". In a sudden liberation from the preceding solemnity and restraint, Phew and Togawa speak in longurs, screams, shouts, abandon sense and word in a frenzy of wah-wah assault, red violence, drum mania, electronic surgery. Perhaps there is a narrative of sorts running through *Dreams*. Impossible for me to say, though the strength of the writing and arranging, the emotional grain of the voices and the conviction of the playing convey their own lucidity, their own dramatic logic. Above all, the record captures Otomo's exuberant, open hearted love of music. In a time of too much product, not enough belief, such a quality is restorative, optimistic, the stuff of dreams. □



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become the norm, technology has made it so easy that the difficulty now is how to get beyond simply "negotiating the maddening canals of an inter-referential texture." Under the name *Fiveive*, Elmes used to construct new pieces out of works by Schoenberg and he's talking about "content" and "abstraction" in place of mere "sampling," he sets up an auteur-composer distinction in opposition to the prevailing practice of plundering and repackaging preexisting musics. Thus his naming of *Cardew, Ayler, Johnson et al* at one level indicates pure "herogay" — to their integrity and, perhaps, with a nod to Frankfurt theorist Theodor Adorno, to an idea of cultural resistance — as opposed to interpretation by sampler-raiding their greatest hits.

Yet Elmes's music sits oddly alongside his chosen pantheon. "Plays Cornelius Cardew" glows into presence with a weighty but wistful organ chord, while clacks and whirs of percussion set up more enervating and intricate eddies. A soaring harmonium-like drone sets the tone, while the background clatter settles into the stush and shuck of piddles being christened in a font, its second part generates a dense pseudo-tropical wash, with echoes of surf and global chanto-like-emerging like tints within an ooily seascoring dance. Cardew meets Eno? On "Plays Casavettes", the title's connection with the end point is equally perplexing. Instead of Casavettes-like explosions of psychological conflict, Elmes procures in his theme a flooding tonal glow, overcoming all temporal discontinuities with its massive, calmative substance. Emotional complexity is transformed into a neo-Romantic horizon of faith. In other words, it gives you everything you don't get in Casavettes films.

The other "Plays" are more uneven in tone. The zooming twangs of loose strings and abrupt jarrings of sound in "Plays Robert Johnson" coagulate into a jostling House rhythm with beats and handclaps. Apparently constructed and mangled out of a solo piece composed by Orles, the Ayler set moves from a twilit world of thoughtful tonal ideas, matched with the abrupt picking and sither of string harmonics, into more spiky glitches and burms.

None of Elmes's connections are certain, whether he is referencing late Romanticism, Ambient or, in the case of "Plays Fichte", quiescent and more dejected soundscapes. As much as he throws out clues, his only definite coordinates — the titular names — are precisely the elements whose meaning remains enigmatic to this Elmes's own form of resistance, or is he just remembering the place where resistance used to be?

#### FARBEN TEXTSTAR

KLANG CD07 CD

BY JOHN MUEY

Like Thomas Brinkmann's *Soul Center*, Jon Jelinek's *Farben* records draw on intimations of soul rather than its broad emotional strokes. Where so many House and Techno musicians before them used samples as a means of easily accessing presence, Brinkmann and Jelinek eschew that option. Compiling the four *Farben* EPs Jelinek has released since 1999, *Textstar* is, superficially, another brilliantly accomplished exhibition of Microhouse's antler chambers. But Jelinek apparently entertains deeper

ambitions for his music, dropping a clutch of historical signifiers on it without backing its precise structures. Unlike his last album, 2001's heavily titled *Loop-Finding-Jay-Records*, the samples on *Textstar* don't entirely disappear into his systems. A few minutes into "Beastone", a whorl of disco strings suddenly materializes out of the echo drone, in lush counterpoint to the grid of grumpy pop and scope loam which he built his rhythm.

His references are not always too subtle. "Love At The Sahara [chose 1973]" is named after an Isaac Hayes album, while "Farben Says: Love To Love You, Baby" nods explicitly to Donna Summer — in name, if not in nature. Even so, his motives remain oblique. He's not out to satirize the nominal soulfulness of his music, nor is he manoeuvring himself into a Great Tradition of dance music. Perhaps the title of his recent EP, *Farben Says: Don't Fight Phrases*, gives a clue to a deeper purpose. Adopting the semantics of soul could be his way of telling listeners that his music deserves a gut response rather than a purely cerebral one.

It is sometimes hard to account to the emotional propulsion of, say, "Farben Says: Love Oh Love", where the microscopic detailing of his beat constructs proves so intellectually obstructing, but *Textstar* is engaging on so many levels that it would be churlish to terrify them. "Soul" is such a critically elusive term, it usually alludes to nothing more than an intangible extra dimension just beyond the reach of straightforward analysis. On *Textstar*, Jelinek has synthesised that response brilliantly: an illusion of significance, perhaps, but one that's every bit as valid.

#### HENRY FLYNT

##### C TUNE

LOCUST MUSIC'S CD

BY BRIAN DAUGHER

As the self-proclaimed inventor of "concept art" and a persistent opponent of cultural orthodoxy, newsmaker philosopher and fiddler Henry Flynt was one of the most radical neo-conformists in a period that boasted many. He is best known for hanging out with the likes of La Monte Young, Fluxus pioneer George Maciunas, Terry Condon (who famously pocketed a Stockhausen concert with Flynt) and fellow mathemathician Catherine Christer Hennix in the early 1960s. His opposition to the capitalist art system and the canonism of his fellow travellers has ensured his own art and music has remained particularly obscure.

C Tune is the third in a series of Flynt recordings unearthed from the period 1975-80. The first, *You Are My Exorcism* (Celestial Power, missus on obscure tape-only recording) documenting his exploration of the psychodelic drone. This was followed more recently with the appearance, two decades after first intended, of *Graduation And Other New Country And Blues Music*, which for the most part gave us a series of skewed takes on hillbilly and blues fiddle music. A further disc, documenting his 60s recordings, is also scheduled from Locust Music.

C Tune is a 47 minute improvisation for electric violin, accompanied by longtime associate Hennix on tambura, that owes its primary inspiration to Flynt's love of Hindustani classical music. Its repeated brief melodic fragments, returning again and again to the same set of notes, and hearing

them from different angles. For the most part, his violin is serene and sensual, languid and lyrical, at times sounding like its ascended sister and at others a little like the Indian shishu. And these moments when his violin breaks into into a shiller, more piercing sound, it bears comparison with Conrad. Though C Tune never departs from its melodic approach, repetition helps create a dreamlike reverie broken only by the brother diversions. It makes fewer compromises than *Graduation* but never pursues the delirious excesses of *Celestial Power*. Instead, this is a far more measured, less indubitably spectacular encounter with the world of bliss.

Flynt has coined the term "breed" for the things we do that we don't have to, and which are done solely for ourselves. His music fits the bill, performed primarily for his own pleasure and not to meet the parameters of "art" or the dictates of an audience. It is precisely Flynt's lack of interest in a musical "career" that ensures his music remains fascinatingly personal.

#### FRED FRITH

MEGACORP RECORDS CD

##### ACCIDENTAL

FREDRER RECORDS CD

BY CLIVE BELL

After establishing his reputation with Henry Cow and The Art Bears, the 1980 album *Gravety* was guitarist Fred Frith's first major project under his own name. The key to its contents is a tiny credit to the "13th Street Puerto Rican Summerme Band: ten seconds of the real thing". This splash of ambient Latin street music originally ended side one of the LP version, culminating "Year Of The Monkey", a carnival collage of honky-tonk piano, street music and ferocious drum descenders. But the whole album resonates with excitement at the composition soundscape of New York, which he adopted as his new home around this time. The overlapping sounds of ethnic life, and what Martin Amis calls "Mashietan, playing its concerto for him", feed directly into his music, which is as humble, inventive and just plain stimulating as it has ever been.

The album's other theme — unexpectedly for England's doyen of art rock guitar — is dance. Tagging orders track one, and fiery east European dance rhythms permeate the first half of the set. Group handclapping underpins rising melodies for mandolin and accordion — Frank Zappa vociferating in Cret? — and two musicians are credited with whirling. A sourly scandalous version of Martha Rexwa's "Dancing In The Street" is laid over the sound of Iranian demonstrators celebrating the capture of American hostages. "Sleep Dancer" is followed by the English country dance lurching of "A Career In Real Estate", and proceedings close with a Dylan-like domestic piano style, while rhapsodic dance on the roof.

In its old vinyl format, the LP's first side was recorded in Sweden, Switzerland, while on the second Paul Sears (drums) and Billy Swann (bass) of the Mullins bring an American directness to exhilarating rock grooves recorded in the US. In fact, *Gravety* is a bit of a classic — good humoured and nicely melodic — but it's a shame that Albie Benge's original cover painting is at best lost in this otherwise welcome rescue.

Although it was written for an actual dance company, *Accidental* lacks the rhythmic



endurance and life de visio of Gravity. The dance piece, "Rogue Tool", was first performed in Tel Aviv in 1996 by the BatSheva Dance Company. The musical accompaniment is a dense, rather po-faced series of pieces. It might be semi-improvised, but live improvisations by Fith are normally a good deal more entertaining than this. Several tracks are based on screaming overt-power chords, dryly manipulated in a computer rather than played. Violin plays over chopped-up radio tunings. A man salivates and gasps in intimate vocal experimentation. It's harsh stuff, and the dead hand of high art pretension lies upon it – qualities usually far removed from Fith's subtle and inventive work.

## SKIP HELLER CAREER SUICIDE

DICTIONARY 123367 CD  
BY DAVID TIGHE

Maybe you know Skip Heller; maybe you don't, but even if you think you don't, a passing knowledge of Dieter's Laboratory on Cartoon Network will have infiltrated his music into your subconscious. There's his *h-lukster* shirt, also — "Maximum Bob" performed by the ICE Contemporary Music Ensemble on Radio Three — and his dedication to entropy is proven by the excellent Live Through and Robert Dismus albums. Heller's music is a mix of pop, indie, and post-rock, mostly through settings for Los Angeles writer Jim Gilleme, recorded in 2000 on *Lab Dore*, captured the LA mood with the same skewed accuracy as David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*. Clearly this is not the resume of a man who commands the best table at Spago. *Career Suicide* is an apt title for an album that recastles in relatively low fidelity the history of LA/LAland popular music from Lita Guernero to Frank Zappa, plus before and after: Since we live in a world of fakes, lookalikes, not terribly among lounge kitsch and nostalgia organs, I guess I'll just make my own things up and hope for material corners in the present and the future. He's in love with this music and has the ardent wish to build something new from it.

The opening "The Raymond Scott Memorial" is played with demerited stride abandon by Lis Gaique. "Frances Farmer," named in homage to one of the ultimate Hollywood victims, could be Sam Ra or organ (in fact, it's Red Young on Fender Rhodes through a Leslie speaker). Anyone who enjoyed the misuses of Impressions Of A Patch Of Blue by Wad Eckerson and Sam Ra will catch this spunky cause along the true highway. A gently rocking cover of Bill Monroe's "I Love The Blues" is sung by Sammy Masters, with suitably irresponsible country guitar by Skip Heller himself. Skip also provides vocal and guitar accompaniment for a demo of Cole Porter's "I Love You, Samanthra," "Aniseed" is a serpentine duet for soprano soprano and piano. "Say Perfume" is just beautifully put together, a close match for the original by Neil Young. "Reddie's Theme" (a) but sufficiency in his name. It comes to provide a dance. Frank Zappa's "Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance" is taken at a jaunty clip, appropriately enough, and somehow suggests its own aquatic pervasiveness.

This is a 23 track album (or 22, since one track apparently disappeared in the mastering stage), so I just don't got the space to talk about all that I'd care to. But I have to mention Big Sandy's Johnny Ots/Elvis Presley favoured

version of Richard Berry's "I Am Bewildered", a terrific Ray Charles rockabilly take and a deadpan Frank Zappa style version of the absolutely unsexy L Cool 'n' Joe/Ruby Ruben track, "Gone With The Wind", originally recorded for the late 1950s soundtrack, "Gone With The Wind" is taken the way I feel *Farlow* might have parodied it, had he been in any way influenced by John Coltrane; and Gregg Allman's "Whipping Post" is sung by Katy Moffatt in a fashion you might appreciate, should you be in a strange bar in a dangerous district short of friendly faces.

Speaking of which, my favourite track is a live ballad of Scott's Hot & Cold, with Chicarro music legend Lo'lo Guerrero singing "Vamos A Bailar" like he's eating poison toads and drinking the sweat of rattlesnakes. More fun than most anything,

## INFORMATION

BIOHERANO  
RINE GRANMOCIN B0024 C2

BY JULIAN COOPER

Per Henrik Svaleskog is an architect who as a club DJ pioneered Norwegian Techno in the early 1990s and has since worked with Bosphorus. Jørgen Knudsen is a composer who works regularly with theatre groups and dance companies. Together, as Information, they have released two previous CDs, made music for films, television and plays, as well as collaborating with painters, sculptors and performance artists.

The duo's intensive experience in applied music comes to fruition in the clarity of design that links *Bismokano* well above banal art of the mall Ambient Techno. They are skilled in generating atmospheres, ethereal expanses, clouds of sound that roll past in skywatcher's slowed time down. Across that vast stage, steel sequences of inventive beats, which cross-toss, dwell and occasionally clash and crumble. Textured with composed deliberation, the album's beats range from the precise and mechanic to a squelchy pulse approximating organs. Snippets of melody are locked in until they become primarily rhythmic motifs. Mood ranges from sombre evocations of looming menace to playful manipulation of techno cliché. The exceptionally high recording quality (a fullmark of Rane Gramscrow!) highlights Information's architectural sense. A piece's consistent rhythmic and melodic space, even with evident care. The heavenly music hovers in the middle distance while beat trajectories climb out the foreground. The components are interesting in themselves but it's Information's skillful handling of relationships amongst them that marks this album as a real advance.

**PHILIP JECK  
STOKE**

**STORE**  
TOUCH TO && CO

BY JIM HAYWARD

With its acrobatic athleticism and penchant for charming gimmicks, in all likelihood HipHop will indefinitely dominate the field of turntablism. Even record-spinning abstractists like Christian Marclay and Martin Titmuss, who may not always share HipHop's necessity for the best, put on flashy demonstrations that engage the machismo of technique, alongside their cinically minded reconstructions of cultural ready-mades. While Philip Jeck's performances, installations, and recordings have centered around his arsenal of turntables (at last count, he was up to 180

anlike Daisette record players, though more normally he performs on two or three, and a random recorder), he isn't terribly interested in the contemporary discourse of turntablism, preferring to coax a haunted impressionism with those tools. However as a calculating improviser he shares affinities with the turntable community. Once he is in control of the overall context of the music, he leaves much to the spontaneous reaction towards sound at any given moment.

A typical Jack composition moves at an incredibly lethargic pace through a series of looped drone tracks caught in the infinities of multiple looped grooves. As he prefers to use old records on his antique turntables, the inevitable surface noise crackles into gossamer rhythms of pulsating hiss. Occasionally, Jack intercedes in his ghostly incognito with a slowly rotated foreground element – a disembodied voice, a melody or simply a fragment of nonspecific sound – which spirals out of focus through a warm bath of delay for almost ten years now. Jack has been developing this methodology, building up to *Stake*, his strongest work to date. Its opening passages are on a par with his *Vlory* *Code* series, with Jack effortlessly transforming gizzled surface noise into languid atmospheres. But *Stake* really gets going with the breathtakingly simple construction of "Pac", upon which Jack overlays an airy, shimmering texture with the limited frequency resolution of a single ascends from an unknown female blues singer. By downpitching her voice from the intended playback of 78 rpm to 16 rpm, he amplifies its emotional tenor by making her drag out her impassioned declarations of misery far longer than is humanly possible. The effect is just beautiful. Philip Jack has always been good, but *Stake* makes him great.

**THOMAS KÖNER**  
UNERFORSCHTES GEBIET

ONE STADT DS43 LP

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

With this limited edition vinyl picture disc showcasing a German map of the North Pole, Thomas Köner returns to the Arctic child of his debut CD, *Nurazul* (Gongium). That album used twisted gothic sounds to conjure a psycho-sonic portrait of Arctic explorer Shapdetso walking to his death. The music's uncanny invocation of the dying man's cooling body temperatures and fading consciousness merging with the Arctic night came to define the condition of isolationism that he'd held sway on electronics' fringes at the beginning of the 1990s. For 1993's *Permafrost*, Köner went to the Arctic himself to get close to his subject.

Things may not have moved on much in Kőner's soundworld, but *Unerforschten Gebiet* still gets the hairs on the back of your neck prickling. Like the unforgiving regions mapped out on the vinyl, where a land mass such as Greenland is 95 per cent ice, the LP's aural territory is disembodied to the point of non-existence. Eschewing track markings and discernible rhythms, each side is a seamless sonic approximation of an unending howling gale that veers wildly in direction and intensity.

It's an immense, literally chilling experience, which demands that you reune your ears entirely, as huge fog banks of scooped-out ambience, and sheets of unnervingly calm and abrasive noise coalesce and disperse imaginary destinations.

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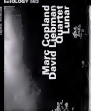
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HATUTLOGY 008



HATUTLOGY 003



HATUTLOGY 002



HATUTLOGY 075



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seem to appear on the horizon, but somehow never come into reach. This some equivalent of empty film reels unspooling necessarily. The paychecks of dead listening you way into the disc's forbidding new silences are not all that pleasant. If these rigorous, demanding pieces drum up moments of awesome beauty, their immensity is just as likely to fill you with new fear.

## ARTO LINDSAY INVOKE

RIGHTOUS BASS PROMO CD

BY LIN PERMAN

Arto Lindsay is a man after my own heart — cat lover, intertemporal traveler, Lacanian phrase-maker, ambivalent reader, ambiguous lover, a heart he freely fully claimed with 1999's pointless songbook *Prize*. What a way to end a century...but where do your eyes (and ears) go after you've claimed your *Prize*? All that leftover time to fill after your Europa moment — it can be a difficult depression.

I'm nobody's therapist, but *Invoke* Arto sounds like a disappointed man. Maybe the perfect love so crassly unattained on *Prize* flew away. "Forgive me: I need absolution," he pleads here. Well, *Invoke* absolutely doesn't bring together — it feels like an ad hoc series of time-lapse dissections to *Prize*'s classic dissection. He sounds, for the most part, stuck, suspended, and too much of *Invoke* comes on like a neuritic cleaving to formula, brittle and gambler where *Prize* was undulant and becalmed. As he put it at the heart of *Prize*'s melancholy anxiety: "Do you have to get too close before you know?" Or maybe he's just spread himself too thin producing other artists, and has reverted to (a) worn out form for his own rushed release?

Lacking the heart or heat of *Prize*, he's lost his previously sure touch. The heavy songs here are too heavy; the light lyrics too World Music fit; even two adroit jewels are worryingly (rather than wistfully) melancholy. Even his turn to "imagination" flags down not spiritual uplift, but a morose, morose baseline; the invocation is the desperate measure of an isolated soul, pierced by recollection of clichés past. "I summon... Illusions! Especially the flimsy underpinnings of temporary things, I invoke, and I invoke, and I invoke..." Only a dependently sensual "bump-bait" saves it from being desperately sad. "On my knees in a new memory/ I call out to you/ Up to my waist in a howling wind/ And all the trash it brings..."

Of course so much of his subtle corpus is about the impossibility of Song, the impossible song the breath he puts into it is from someone supposedly "too intelligent" for the game, too aware to sing a simple song, and given all that, his trumpet howl/roar has been how easy he thinks it sounds, what Easy listening he makes of such difficult choices. As he said so accurately on *Prize*: "This, says it all." So much hangs on tone, and it has gone away here; the tone is to say the least, disconcerting. But, it don't flow like before. Too many of *Invoke*'s songs are mere last-seconds, seriously NYC street ballad. Where before he, perked like a hitmaker Frank O'Hara skit, in dures of his own self crystalline syntax, here it's gourd out, like bad Byme, just listing, the oblique drift of before constructed, all tense where before was loose.

I'm not aware to alienation effects, but here the

static between clashing strophes and styles sounds not intentional but inadvertent. And I'm not unsympathetic to a case of burnt out muse, less knows, OK, I know the form, she has asserted herself and the words won't come, fair enough...

On *Prize* he sounded reptile, open wide, worshipping howls *Invoke* reads like sketchbook notes towards a cleavage he can't quite bring himself to sign off on. And what's frustrating is that the two tracks which stand out ("Wilmington" and "Theater") suggest a pastoral suite, a Let's Get it On for post-Freudians, unincorporated, intellectual, intimate, where *Loss* as a subject might be transmuted into music that, to use his own words, also roars like before.

## MAPSTATION A WAY TO FIND THE DAY

STUDIOGLOBE 20 CD

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Mapstation is the solo project of To Rococo Rot's Stefan Schneider. *A Way To Find The Day*, his fourth release under the alias, is a quiet, cushioned, singularly lovely record. Despite its dub underpinnings there's very little weight to it; it drifts with unclouded ease. The instrumentation is essentially simple, featuring long-bodied bass tones, chiming melody lines and a scattered array of some vice squeal and buzz. Unlike the clicks and cuts school, which uses some of the same elements, Schneider lets his melodies lead his songs. Woven from rustling bass tones, sandblasted static, futuristic aluminum harmonies his textures are exquisite, but they're not the only point of focus.

There are unexpected, possibly unintended, echoes of other works here. "Stand Me Stand Version" opens with a demure keyboard figure that sounds uncannily like a Peace Orchestra song. But where the Peter Kruder project uses meaning sub-bass and dubwise effects to afflict an interminable chime, Schneider's tortoise-like meanderings reduce the discordant, lounge and the bedroom alias. Stranger still are the two tracks started by Ray Gossweil. It took a handful of listens to realize that his voice recalled San Francisco chronic Mark Eppel's muted baritone. As the most evocative songs here, these slow, radiant gems caught between pop, reggae and R&B are the album's highlights. Gossweil's plaintive voice seems weighed down with longing and tethered by want, while all manner of beeps and squeals float flickeringly into the static sphere.

## MATMOS LIVE WITH J LESSER

VAGUE TERRAIN VAGUE CD

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

As the Matmos Vibe makes clear, it's difficult to work out from the packaging what the title of the San Francisco duo's latest offering might be. The artwork variously names it *Doug O'Grip*, *Matmos Live* and *Matmos With J Lesser, High, Live And Grry*. The pair stress that this limited edition disc, compiling performances and radio improvisations from the last five years, is not the new Matmos LP as such, which is currently slated for a 2003 release. And indeed, this feels more like a humorous gag, tying up loose ends and having a bit of fun in the process. In their words, the record "combines Matmos's predilection for mesaque concrete slapstick and live sampling with J Lesser's frenzied power

electronics and shattering resonance cut ups... drop down and prepare for some harshly abrasive feedback, fangs-as-the-mouse jumpsuits, out of tune guitars, levels in the red and the occasional moment that could fairly be described as 'silly'."

Sure enough, some of it is indeed 'silly,' but several moments here are anything but. Schmidt might show his fan into a 5-gallon bucket of cement to begin proceedings with a host of ooey, slurring noises; and later on his credits might include duck calls, wailer tracks, vacuum cleaner tube, balloons and helium tank, as well as his trusty SH-101, but there is a method to this madness. Edited to sound seamless, the set is a whirl of out-of-control bass dranes, speaker-shredding metallic percussion, visceral digitalism and hamstrung orchestral leech that settles briefly into the mood of Sister-in-Sonic Youth, before squiggling off into chaotic free improvisation. Elsewhere, swirled electro motifs along awkwardly like very early Acid House, while a Space Inwards console has a nervous breakdown. The final impression is of Matmos jetsetting several years' worth of studio/cabin fever in one swoop. Lots of fun for them and pretty enlightening for us too.

## MELVINS HOSTILE AMBIENT TAKEOVER

PDCAM IPOC200 CD

## FANTASMES MELVINS BIG BAND MILLENNIUM MONSTERWORK

PDCAM IPOC19 CD

BY MA CLARKE

18 years after their formation, The Melvins' commitment to distorted heavy rock remains undimmed. As prolific as they are persevering, Hostile Ambient Takeover is their fifth release in the last 12 months. Originating from Aberdeen, Washington, The Melvins famously influenced local groups like Mudhoney and Nirvana. Indeed, Kurt Cobain called The Melvins his favorite group and in 1993 co-produced their *Houdini* album. In 1998 it was their spawning original member, singer/guitarist Buzz Osbourne and drummer Dale Drommer, were joined by Joshhawk and Gows bassist Kevin Kadogan.

Regardless of line-up hiccups, The Melvins' distinctive, twisted hardcore studge has changed little over the last two decades. Thick Black Flag's Greg Ginn, with cat scratch fever, trying to fight his way out of the slime. Often reminiscent of Black Flag's crutching chord structure, Osbourne plays guitar with the same determined, youthful energy that animated through their 1986 debut, *Gluey Porch Treatments*. A rush of distorted power rhythms and forceful bass muscle through. Crier's strong and regular beats. Often harsh is its ferocity, many of the tracks here collapse into frenzied streams of tense feedback, and most pressingly, some devastating 60 second drum solos. It may hold no surprises, but Hostile Ambient Takeover is a resounding testament to The Melvins' singularity of purpose.

The same appeal to Millennium Monsterwork a merger of Melvins with Mike Patton's Fantamas. The Fantamas Melvins Big Band existed for just one night, on 5/10/95 in San Francisco on 31 October 2000. Their set drew from The Melvins' and Fantamas's songbooks but with the proviso that each number should be decorated and reconfigured new. The resulting album sounds surprisingly good considering it's a hybrid of the

**Taj Mahal Travellers'**  
**Fluxus-inspired space**  
**jams were more than**  
**just hippy odysseys,**  
**says Alan Cummings**



Takahisa Kosugi (far left) with Taj Mahal Travellers in 1970

**TAJ MAHAL TRAVELLERS**

JULY 15, 1972

SHOWBOAT SWANE/07D90621 CD

**TAKEHISA KOSUGI**

**CATCH-WAVE**

SHOWBOAT SWANE/07D90622 CD

One of the few Japanese musicians to work on a truly international scale, Takahisa Kosugi has been a constant and distinctive figure in the avant garde since the early 60s. Like a more self-effacing Ryuichi Sakamoto, he's equally at home in New York lofts, Tokyo gallery spaces and European concert halls. Kosugi has always located himself squarely on the intermedia frontline of composition, art, radical performance and improvisation. His involvement in the notorious art-performance group Hi Red Centre led to contacts with Fluxus and friendships with dancer Merce Cunningham, John Cage and David Tudor. More recently he has played with Sonic Youth and Jim O'Rourke, and one of his pieces was covered on SY's *Goodbye 20th Century* project.

Formed while he was still at art college in 1960, Kosugi's first music group, Group Ongaku, gave a dense, sprawling improvised blanket out of fashionable concerns like the use of non-musical objects, and an "automatism" approach inspired equally by Cagean ideas of chance, Surrealist automatic writings and Jackson Pollock's action painting. The ideal of moving beyond the artist's limiting consciousness, of opening up his art to the meditation of physical phenomena is one that has stayed with Kosugi. Perhaps that is why, unlike so many theorists of sound, he has stuck with a single instrument: the violin. However, it was the discovery of miniature signal generators during a two year sojourn in New York from 1965-67 that really decided his future methodology. He found that by placing two generators in close proximity, the

intermodulation of two high frequency radio waves inaudible to the human ear could create an audible, phasing soundwave. This heterodyne effect – of making the inaudible audible, the invisible visible, transcending the human sensory range – has played a massively important part in his music ever since.

Of all Kosugi's projects, Taj Mahal Travellers are the most steeped in exoticism and mystery; a seven piece (six musicians, one sound engineer), leaderless, communal group who played marathon 12 hour concerts on deserted beaches and hilltops, stirring acoustic and primitive electronic instruments, heavy processing and visual projections into a heady mind-altering stew. A hippy odyssey in a beat-up Volkswagen camper van across Europe, Iran and Afghanistan on their way to the Taj Mahal itself did no harm to the legend either. Their two monstrously rare albums have been whispered about in collectors' circles for decades with the kind of reverence ordinarily reserved for the Holy Grail. Their August 1974 studio album was finally reissued a couple of years back, but Sony's legendary reluctance to license its releases until now meant that a reissue of the group's debut, July 15, 1972, was presumed nigh on impossible. Unlike the expansive, slow development of the 74 studio date, 1972 catches the Travellers in a more impulsive mood on stage at a benefit gig to raise funds for their trip to the KGB festival in London. The music is based around long, undulating wave-like tones, sometimes on signal generators, oscillators and echo machines, other times on Kosugi's electric violin or processed vocals. A variety of wind instruments – trumpet, tuba and harmonica – weave glittering paths through the sea spray. Individual exits and entrances are freely determined, with no instrument playing a lead role. This lends the performance the sense of randomly woven carpet, with multi-coloured threads warping in

and around each other, contributing to a final form but no definite pattern. Even without the visual element (the seated performances were accompanied by a film of waves slowly crashing on a beach), the effect is deeply immersive and meditative, with a gorgeous sensory immediacy. In spite of the group's reputation as trip merchants supreme, this is less a drug-induced psychedelic voyage into the depths of the unconscious than an isotope illumination of the secret processes of the physical world.

Kosugi's solo *Catch-wave* explores similar processes, but this time in a solo context. Released in 1975 while the Travellers were still extant, it showcases two performances, "Meno-dharma 74" and "Wave Code #1-1". Kosugi first performed "Meno-dharma" (also known as "Catch-wave") in New York in 1967, and he was to return to it throughout his career – most recently in a 1997 Tokyo performance I was lucky enough to witness. Tiny radio transmitters and receivers dangled from the ceiling on fishing line, are caused to sway back and forth randomly by a rotating electric fan, setting up heterodyne soundwaves. Kosugi sat on the floor singing and bowing his violin in forms that echo the heterodyne waves, surrounded by electronic oscillators, and eerily lit by a back projection of waves on a beach. The seemingly autonomous solo performer is in fact caught in an invisible web of oscillating waves – wind, light, sound, electricity. Time, space, consciousness all echo back upon themselves, creating a richly resonant work. "Wave Code #1-1" layers a predetermined set of looped and processed onomatopoeic words over each other to spacey effect, even as they're grounded by the deep lunar ebb and flow of pulsed waveforms. We're fortunate to have such theoretically rigorous yet sensuously immediate work back in circulation. □

group's own soundboard recording and a fan's bootleg recorded on minidisc, Osborn's guitars are often furious, but it's the extreme velocity of Finnish's summer drive (Lambert, formerly of Slayer, that really kicks the music into the endzones. Correlated by the dark, ominous growls of vocalist Mike Patton, Millennium Manors/wave is one of the most challenging rock records you're likely to hear this year.

## MÜLLER/KAHN/DIEB13

### STREAMING

FOR 4 EARS 1343 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

These five mysterious and austere tracks (all untitled, total duration 39 minutes) are further evidence of the drift in improvised music, especially electronic, away from "traditional" motif interplay — what Keith Rowe has referred to as the "old language" — towards a certain reductionism, manifest either through greater use of silence or, as is the case here, extended, slow-moving sound tableaux. At times the music has a discernibly Japanese feel, reminding you that percussionist Jason Kahn has lived and worked there, and both Günter Müller and Dieb13 have collaborated with visiting Japanese musicians, such as Taku Sugimoto.

Müller's discreet minimalist percussion is closer in sound to his releases with Sugimoto than his effervescent outings with Li Quan Ninh and poez\_z, and timbaleist Dieb13's work resembles the dark cracklings on his 1999 Dunas album *Printer*, with Wiener Daiselcorder and Uli Fussenegger, more than it does his ebullient solo set, *Restructuring*, on Charisma. Fleeting aspects of the recognizable world — pianos, car horns, crowd noise, insects, the countdown sequence to a rocket launch — on the third track serve only to reinforce a certain sense of foreboding. But perhaps that impression is coloured by the sound of real crowds massing outside in the streets of Paris as I listen. Track four barely sustains life through a haze of high frequencies before turning into what sounds like large, malcontent amphibians playing a decidedly sinister video game, which builds to a ferocious climax and then dies alternately quickly. With its disjointed bleeps and mumbles peering out from behind a veil of eerie drones and creaks, the closing track feels like to reassess. Once again, it doesn't so much end as die, taking the album out with it. In the new language, there are no more full stops or end sentences, only sliders to pull down.

## NOOD GOOD NIGHT SLEEP

SMELLS LIKE T.M. 1343 CD

BY MIA CLARKE

Based in Rochester, New York, Nod first emerged through the Stateside underground as punk rockers in the early 90s. Since then, their artistic consensus appears to be non-commercial confluences of genres. The four albums preceding *Good Night Sleep* (their third on Sonic Youth drummer Steve Shelley's excellent Smells Like Records), were a mix of post-punk, free jazz and quiet indie pop. *Good Night Sleep* similarly refuses to resist itself as any one practice. Its sparse production ethic allows space for improvisation.

Consisting of rhythm section Timothy Poland and Brian Shaffer, and the shaky, emotive vocals of Scrippsy Joe Soriano, Nod's present sound lies somewhere between Workingman's Dead and Garth Brooks and the artistic decay of San Francisco duo These More Shallows. Drums and guitar lie relatively low in the mix, giving precedence to Soriano's receding, musing lyrics. On occasion, they go for a faltering first take feel to preserve the music's live texture. This is particularly evident on the instrumental "Space Whale", where the dominant bass muddles into layers of spontaneous, incoherent guitar refrains. At times, they edge into rock from the rugged austerity of folk and blues, but its most charming moments appear during the instrumental interludes, which move gently and untroubled as they wait for Soriano's mellifluous voice to pick up the theme.

## KIMMO POHJONEN

### KLUSTER

ROCKABILL 230204 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

More flaming bellows than fanning lips, Finland's accordion titan Kimmo Pohjonen is back with a second solo album. *Kluster* is his new project, an enjoyable album soundtracking what is no doubt a visually rich piece of music theatre. Pohjonen's last visit to London climaxed with the performer being apparently decapitated, jaw-like, by his own instrument. Pohjonen doesn't so much play avant garde music as stretch his accordion beyond its limits to produce an extravaganza of mass appeal. The album cover sets the tone: bathed in the flames of hellfire, Pohjonen and percussionist Samuli Kosminen are fallen angels, their wings represented again and again by fiery accordion

bellows. Scandinavian folk dancing this ain't.

Pohjonen's aesthetic position is over the top, and thrusts an air of overheated, camp frenzy about his, barely held in check by a gleam of ironic taste. The accordion, panned and swirled through effects, gauges a series of Eastern European rhythms into a seething Thracian fantasia. Flamenco-style clicks and stamps fan the flames; voices evoke souls in torment; and Kosminen's rhythmic samples conjure up infernal frying and boiling, or maybe a cauldron of snowing monsters.

Melodies may be sketched on the back of an envelope, structures may be predictable, but never mind all that, feel the bravura, surrender to the Pink Floydian swagger, cover before the mighty catstroph of Pohjonen's ten ton truck of an accordion. The accordion devours the world — everything here is sourced from his accordion or voice, from the grand gaol of "Ulam" to the throbbing massmen of "Yolma". If ever there was a natural to cover "Flot" by The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Kimmo Pohjonen is it.

## POIRE\_Z

+ FIRSTWAVE 023 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

Originally the name of an album on Günter Müller's for 4 Ears label featuring him and fellow Swiss electronics wizards Norbert Möslang and Andy Dahl (aka Vexx Crack) and French timbaleist Erik M (nowadays on mandolins and sampling), poez\_z eventually became a regular working group. To ticken the plot, each of the three tracks on this, their third album, features a guest musician: "Bottle\_Bow" and "Cable-Stitched\_Colypso", recorded live at New York's Tonic in May 2001, add Osborn Yoshimide and Christian Knyck respectively, while "Kick-Off\_Knock" arrives from a concert in Porters, France, with Sachiko M.

Unsurprisingly, the music is dense and won't mean a thing to anyone not prepared to give it their undivided attention. Having been twice disappointed by the group's mindboggling live, I wonder whether the superb opening gesture of "Bottle\_Bow" was what actually kicked off the piece at Tonic, or a cunning afterthought on the part of Günter Müller, who spent four months editing and mastering the disc. Perhaps he imposed its commendable clarity of compositional structure and instrumental mix during post production. With minutes the piece settles down into a kind of stasis. The musicians

seem to have a tacit agreement that one of them should maintain the drone, consisting more of superimposed loops than static pulses, in order to leave the others free to explore different territory. The music's stultified nature and slow heartbeat — no "um as a sequence" here, those mindsets are slow to cue — point back once more to AMM, as do Vexx Crack's occasional sketches of local radio and mangled pop. Despite its punchy title, "Kick-Off\_Knock" is a more contemplative affair, with Sachiko's distinctive high frequencies adding a sense of space. However, Christian Marclay's 100+ gpm turntable antics sound rather nostalgic in the midst of skipping Cde first sweeps, crackles, pops and lingua franca on the final track, whose delightful, high end squiggles help bring the album to something approaching a climax.

## EDDIE PRÉVOST MATERIAL CONSEQUENCES

WARRIOR 1343 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

When percussionist Eddie Prevost chooses to concentrate on a certain piece of kit, then you can be sure that he'll apply it to full potential for generating sound. As he says in his introductory essay, "I bow, scrape, pluck and hit direct and glancing blows in my engagement... I might even draw blood." Following on from his essential debut, *Loop Of Change — Sound And Sensibility*, his second foray into solo percussion contains work of similar forensic clarity.

Prevost takes great pains to differentiate sound sources and juxtapose varying degrees of resonance. His infatuation with projecting the tactileity of percussion for the listener is matched by his own need for academic enquiry into the subject of the artist's place within his work. Although it is not essential to put his theories, as presented in the CD booklet's essays, in the text by associating them with the music produced, the two are intrinsically linked. His solo method is to enter the studio without preconception, yet obviously with a very acute awareness of cause and effect, in the hope of the unexpected occurring. This is as good a working definition of improvisation as any and Prevost embraces it like an old friend.

Delicacy of touch should not be misconstrued as tentativeness; likewise contrabassional directness should not be mistaken for heavy-handed abstruseness. When he hits an instrument, it is with precise calculation of weight, angle of attack, speed of approach and, most importantly,

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# Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

By contributors by Peter Dinklage & Gertie Wessner

**Hose-Mailer's** files are a Brussels-based collective, whose work encompasses theatre and elaborate multimedia performances, as well as the esoteric soundscapes they present on their *Alpacas 107* (Beta Lactam M027 107). Varied videos of their work would provide a welcome study aid, but the group is quite worthy if pure audio terms. Combining natural and virtual sounds with vaguely threatening sheets of air, surreal, and what appears to be the clasp of homemade instruments, Hose-Mailer's files create an ambience akin to Noah's Ark floating down into the midst of a late-night *Blade Runner* dystopia. Which is pretty cool no matter what they look like. (BC)

**The Vus Delivers Organization** is a group associated with the Texas space-rock underground and their most recent release is an archival 107 entitled *107* (Beta Lactam M028 107). Recorded in 1997, the three instrumental tracks here combine a Krautrock backdrop with incoherent foreign and moan reminiscent of America's classic experimentalists like The Residents and the LAFMS gang. The music here insists any kind of conceptual doing (it could be from any time in the last 25 years and refuses to resist Prog temptations), which is a real plus as is the song title "Taking Transcendental Mountain (By Sedation)", which deserves a prize of some sort if you offering one. (BC)

Just about the time you thought it was safe to forget about Big Star intrudes, along comes a band like **The Possibilities**, whose take on the production of pop ready-made is crude enough to merit investigation. Their debut 7", *Invisible/It Ain't You* (Feed & Seed SEED001 7"), harks back to the pre-gory days of American garage pop, when guys like Chris Stills and Mitch Easter were still trying to connect the dots between Jeff Lynne and Alex Chilton. From somewhere beyond the blue event horizon, Alan Bruck (the late founder of Car Records) is issuing down and smiling. (BC)

**Elshard Olsen's** Raynor Corcoran Cawley (Bustop Boy B-B0Y10 7") is the fourth of his "tribes" excursions, which seem to be more about "creating while filled with the spirit of the dedicatee" rather than replicating or summoning anything that refers to them specifically. This is perhaps less obvious here than it was on the volumes dedicated to Robert Johnson and Albert Ayler, but neither the lush organ drone of the A side nor the pseudo-choral assemblage of the B side make one think of anything particular

to Cawley. Still, these seven, long matters sound great on this single, better than they possibly could on an LP or CD. The inherent confinement of the format is suited to this kind of music better than you can imagine. Investigation will bear rich fruit. (BC)

Mom hot spit from the neo-glitter noise brigade has emerged on a split 7" shared by Portland, Oregon's **Glass Candy** and San Francisco's **Subotina** (Troubadour Unlimited TM0041 7"). The Subotina's track, "Into the Fire", has a horn part that thrusts squarely into X-Ray Spex realms. Glass Candy's "Crystal Magma" sounds like something that could have been on the soundtrack to *Privilege* if it had been made a few years later and had starred Johnnie instead of Paul Jones. Wonderful stuff. (BC)

Cologne's **Felix Kubin** recently brought a much needed dose of glitchy glitch can't London's Ether Festival, and some of the instruments he entertained us with are on the six track Jet-Lag Disco (A-Muse A19 3" CD). "Hotel Supernova" is OST to a self-made trippy video, showing just what you can do with a few spare OAD, a bunch of willing friends, a palette of acrylic paints and a few rolls of Basoflex—Star Trek, Superstardom and Kurt's well all seem to peak in around Kubin's shiny curtain for that one. Kubin's an odd tick and no mistake. (RC)

**Tore Hauken** Bae has long history with the Norwegian Otagara Repetitive collective. On the cover of *Sokstet* (Safe As Milk/Melodrom MELX001 7") he stands naked. Well, not naked, exactly, but alone. Well, not alone, exactly, but accompanied only by some source tapes, some outery and some eggheads. Anyway, the single has two recordings of his piece, "Sokstet", which creates a musical event sequence from the aforementioned pieces. As is expected, the improvised composition is a collection of small gestures. The live parts tug at the edge of your consciousness, like happenings just outside your field of vision, while the recorded parts provide a muzz curtain, elegantly highlighting the trickle and clunk of the assembled an' broken. (BC)

Colin **Daniel Weaver** has popped up now and then over the past 15 years or so, whether as a collaborator with Stock, Hansen & Walkman or as an improviser in his own right. As his new double CD set implies, he's recently been sticking his coils into his computer and taken on the identity of Urologist. A double disc set of his *Electro Ecologic* (Loverpool/Loverpool: Newcastle 2/Chimes/India, *Electro Ecologic 1, a/b/2X3*

CD), tucked in a piece of folded PVC moisture foam, begins with some sad-sounding layers of finger-on glass squealing, close-miked wheezing, autotune gurgles and slurred, slowed vocal growls. The label's aesthetic is "busy" too, mechanics and spit and sawdust computing, and there's a fair amount of Auto-Matic intervention capturing Weaver's scuffs and snobs and whistling them into stiff loops. By the time you reach the second disc's duo with Yoshiyuki Nakamura, all instrumental reference points are lost in a dirty, humming harmonic noise. It's collo, captain, but not as we know it. (RC)

San Francisco's **Dearhoof** have been one of America's most splendidly confounding groups for many years now. Their two dynamics range through many cracks on the face of the post-core scene, and they always attack listeners in unexpected ways. Their latest 7", *C/Surprise Symphony* (Cool Beans CB20 7") is done in their most winningly pompous guise. Although the struts of the tunes push some odd buttons, their burst is akin to the late 80s screw-funk stuff that crumbled out one end of the *Baranish* era. The music is somehow off, but it's tolerable to many tongues (especially those that don't observe its details too closely). (BC)

As far as can be discovered, **Shuttle** is the sole project of Philadelphia-based composer Todd Christopher. He has reportedly released over a dozen album-length projects on his Astronauts label, but the first 7" is the *Black Crusis EP* (Astronauts 2 7"). The record is playable at any speed, but 33 sounds pretty much the best to my ears. At that pace, the two pieces come off in nice section sections (hah some out of sync, mid-70s Prog jams. The atmosphere in which the pieces are placed is thick with butter fog, but there are hints of out of time "standard" instrumentation, as well as howling-side organ accumulation, and ghosts of found sounds. The combination works especially well on side B, where there are passages that recall prime Verbo (if there is such a thing). (BC)

The Report label, based at the Vinylincision record shop in Athens, releases a broad range of Greek independent music. Panning off local and international artists, its Kontaki Split 7" series is a useful gauge of the state of Greek independent music. Each of the seven releases is limited to 365 copies, and the catalogue numbers refer to one of the seven standard F-stop on a camera (f/2.8, f/3.5, f/5.6, f/8, f/11, f/16, f/22). Coloring

with the series is an edition of 365 contact sheet photographs taken at the different F-stops, which are destined to end up on the covers of their records. Customers can match photographs and singles themselves. So far, one of the most accomplished in the series is the split 7" shared by **Bank** and **Drug A-Tek** (Report F.11 7"). Bank's Christophe Mevel is based in France and on "Aureno" he departs from the melodies of previous releases in favor of a droned rhythm, twanging bassline and a swirl of synth, sounding like psychedelic West Coast garage trapped in a tent. Drug A-Tek is a group from Athens whose "Theme Totalment" is a moody, Ambient soundtrack from a mix of studio and homemade instruments. This live take creates an intense atmosphere where straps and clockwork bells float over deep bass and dubby effects. The exploration of post-rock continues with Stuttgart's **Ma Cherie For Painting**, whose looping chords and cynical refrains echoes the use of Julie Krivete's material, "Memento one", as the chorus to "Memento" (Report F.8 7"). The tip is provided by **Thierry On Claves** who, although they are from Athens, could be any number of British indie groups from the late 80s on, combining electronics and drum machines with shimmering guitars and droning vocals that echo out from two messes of the mix. On the electronics front is the split (Report F.3.5 7") between the US's **Flowchart**, and his bad trip where everything is slowed down and out of sync, and Greece's **Val**, whose standard issue crunchy beats have a charming piano and discreet furlar melodies floating over them. **Celli** is the Greek electronic scene's star, and, like Boars of Canada, on F.5.6 he uses the sounds of children at play to create an enveloping pocket of nostalgia that harks back to watching programmes about the mystery of life in science class. (BB)

Anyone who finds Old Political's angular electronics among the most childish and nerdy music on earth will probably think similarly of as member **Adrian's** *Yulu Ben* (Nigritone MEDW028 3" CD), comprising seven clumping cuts that feed in a predictable overflow of bugs, babytalk and faintest basslines. There's no doubting the punish awareness of the sound sculpting, but, like the Willapipes who post the Biblical scenes they've fashioned out of their old Lego collections, you can't help wishing such intelligence was better employed. (RC) Reviewed by Ben Borthwick, Byron Coley and Rob Young



## Soundcheck

he does so without fear. Privost knows his place within the picture and takes it up with unreeling accuracy. He is the actor to which there is an equal and opposite reaction: the first law of physics made manifest.

From the first tickling cynical patterns on "Steaming," with their accompanying bowed cymbal scrapes, through "Dance Music Of An Imaginary People" and on to "Mostly Flowing," we are in very assured hands. Privost's percussion world is free, but he also enjoys working within structural limitations. These define form and provide a tangible space to fill. Setting manageable parameters frames the space for free expression. A sense of control is, after all, the sign of a master. It follows that in order to subvert a tradition, you must first understand it. This album includes "Sturdy Drum Solo," which Privost plays in a conventional manner. But, placed last on the album, it informs all that went before it, lending its every abstraction and its every nuance additional resonance.

These four pieces are completed by a 'ghost' quality possibly best described as Privost's non-performance. Public consumption is definitely not a priority here, meaning listeners get to savour Privost fully absorbed in his ongoing percussive laboratory. Although the ego must be present in the performer, it is most manifest in the pursuit rather than the discipline. Privost lets the focus fall on what he describes as "the objects under analysis," while ceaselessly working to achieve Carver's dictum of "letting sounds be sounds".

### ROGER REYNOLDS ALL KNOWN ALL WHITE POBUS PRODUCTIONS P21025 CD BY JULIAN COWLEY

Like Robert Ashley, only a few years younger, Roger Reynolds grew up and studied in Michigan. During the 1960s he contributed to the music media (MOC, Festivals) created by Ashley and Gordon Mumma in Ann Arbor. In 1969 Reynolds became founding director of the Centre for Music Experiment at University of California, San Diego. A successful academic and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, he has kept his experimental edge, feeding revisions from the sound laboratory into his finely crafted compositions. Trained in engineering physics, he has drawn continual inspiration from the alchemists of the word. His album piecespace presented settings of Borges, Calvino, Joyce, Wallace Stevens and Marquez. All three pieces on *All Known All White* were

recorded previously on CD vinyl. They sounded fantastic then and remain fabulous in every sense. The title of the new CD is taken from Samuel Beckett's short fiction *Ang*, and the composers Ping (1968) and Traces (1969) take their lead from both that minimalist text and the emptying out of the novel form. But the Giacometti-like sparseness of Beckett's text scarcely suggests the sensuality and dramatic depth to be found in Reynolds's music.

Discussing Ping in Mary Bryden's book *Samuel Beckett And Music*, he explains that instead of mirroring the text with stark permutations of pared down musical cells, he opted for "the poetic and exclamations of the unruly images and emotions that arose out of the field of his apparently chaste words". Reynolds was living in Tokyo when he received an invitation from Yoko Takemitsu to write this piece for a festival. Performed here by Reynolds on piano, his wife Karen on flute, Paul Chihara on percussion and harmonium, with Alan Johnson adding live electronics, Ping is vivid and strange. Bowed cymbals, steady piano rumblings and luminous emanations from the instrument's strings, mournful flute and harmonium, sporadic bursts of harsh electronic noise add emotional gloss to the wistful zone of Beckett's post-apocalyptic Traces combines Karen Reynolds's flute and the taped sounds, signal generator and ring modulation of Johnson's electronics with Ying Takemitsu's dynamic piano playing and Lin Barna's cello. The piano's concentrated utterances explode over the wavering trails laid down by the other instruments in a Beckettian balance of intensity and depletion. Taking its title from Herman Melville's epic *Moby Dick*, ... The Serpent-Snapping Eye (1978) brings together Edwin Hallen's trumpet, Carl Lytle's piano and Daryl Pratt's percussion with a tape of computer synthesized sound. The instrumentalists set off supported by the pre-recorded material. They are then set adrift before they are finally required to extend the taped sounds. It's an especially rich piece that glitters as it darts, corrects and corks, spiralling forwards. *All Known All White*: still fresh, still brilliant.

### ROTHKO A CONTINUAL SEARCH FOR ORIGINS TOO PURE PURE127 CD BY TOM RIDGE

From the start, the music Rothko made was always competing for attention with the group's

means of production, namely their three bass line-up. While the novelty of their instrumentation may have been a useful talking point to generate interest in the beginning, unfortunately it often acted as not generated more interest than the music itself. The group's debut, *A Negative For Francis*, captured Rothko's strengths as a compact unit, where contrasting Ambient and angular elements pushed the limitations of their instrumentation, and often impressively overcome them with some inspired bass interplay. On subsequent recordings they moved away from that debut's belevered approach, broadening their textual base without sacrificing the music's characteristic structures.

Since the original's disbanding, Mark Beazley took over the Rothko name for both his solo work and collaborative ventures. Here members of Delicate AWOL contribute a broader range of sounds, including guitar, keyboards and percussion. Yet you immediately notice a consistency of feeling between the old Rothko and the new. Beazley has retained his taste for stripped down asceticism, which is perfectly embodied in the isolated vocals of Caroline Ross on the album's opening track. Rothko has used vocals before. Now as then, the voice is used more to establish a mood than provide a narrative. A series of instrumental builds, built upon sinuous basslines and angular cascades of guitar notes. This Beazley-led Rothko is looser, better prepared to explore the unknown. "Fragile Strands Of Time" has acoustic guitar and a more fluid, jazzy feel: driven by full-blooded percussion, "I Sense You Fading Away" as close as Rothko are likely to get to rock. "Deepest Shadows Have Light" offsets the supple dynamics of its rhythm with some angular bass, its skewed, fusion-style backing overlaid with melodic swooshes of guitar and keyboard.

On occasion, it sounds like Beazley is trying too hard to produce a mood through an over-reliance on supporting sound samples — rainfall, thunder, etc. But the music is good enough to get by without such corny trappings.

### MICHAEL J SCHUMACHER FOUR STILLS SEEDMOUNT, SEED002 CD BY JULIAN COWLEY

*Four Stills* is a very beautiful recording. The four visual stills on the cover, photographed by Swiss artist Ursula Scherrer, show a weathered wall behind stalks of frozen vegetation rising from a

bed of snow. Scherrer's husband is the New York based electronic guitarist, drone composer and installationist Michael J. Schumacher, who has created music to match. Each piece is a study in stillness, at once stationary and ceaselessly busy in the fine detail. Each has the placidity of classic drift work, but also the buzz and better of animated micro-events currently favoured in so much of today's quiet music. On one track, Charles Curtis, who first introduced Schumacher to La Monte Young, plays cello. On another Tim Barnes contributes percussion that tells dramatically around a centre of calm. George Bishop is reading somewhere and Gertud Agner dances on a creaky bedboard. Synthesizers are activated. Recordings of radio static, a steam heater and ce cummings reading a poem are filtered in. Schumacher plays sparse, light as air phrases on a MIDI grand piano, and plays guitar in ways that are sculptural in their highly skilled carving and curving of acoustic space.

Schumacher alludes to generative algorithms and speaks of these pieces as expressions of a number system he has used in electronic compositions since 1989. The ear does come to discern patterns that unfold and processes that crystallise, but just as the structure of snowflakes or the cells that form plants seem considerations set apart from the process of Scherrer's images, so abstract design seems incidental to the experience of hearing this unique and very beautiful music.

### SCOTT SMALLWOOD DESERT WINDS: SIX WINDBLOWN SOUND PIECES AND OTHER WORKS DEEP LISTENING DL12962 CD BY OLIVE BELL

Plenty of musicians can name their composition "Debts", but Scott Smallwood means it quite literally. The opening track of this intriguing release features ominous creaking and flapping noises over a Thomas Körner-type drone, the sound of the horizon being gilded in their hair. Distort thunder completes the picture. We are standing on a US Air Force airfield in Utah, by a pile of bedrocks, concrete pipes and other debris, outside "abandoned Building 1819". We listen while the wind "plays" the junk.

The bulk of the album is based on Smallwood's recordings of what the wind gets up to in the Utah desert. He stands in the rusting hanger that housed the Enola Gay

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# The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Get stinky, baby, baby if you want it. Sensational

**Crooked** (WordSound WSD41 CD+DVD) is a DVD/CD double pack containing the complete WordSound-backed film and its soundtrack, both starring the label's underground mainstay Sensational. A piece of HipHop Taction!, cheaply shot in video vernis, Sensational hands the man a coin-size folded bill for his test pressing, gets on the subway, sports and approaches a woman. He tells her he just came from the studio only to be met with an icy denial. But he follows her to a club anyway. The club happens to be hosting an open mic competition, with Anti-Pop Consortium in action of stage. When they finish, Sensational hands the DJ his vinyl and performs "In My Town" to a less than frenzied audience. However, a disgruntled Brooklynite takes interest in Sensational's outlandish mumbling rap style, they head to an apartment to smoke the "sticky icky ricky," and the quest for HipHop respect begins. Recorded in crisp digital video, the movie component follows in the tradition of movies by musicians about musicians. It narrates the meandering journey of a hustling Sensational, bouncing from bad drug deals to temble drug deals to steady record deals. Such is the NYC HipHop world, here presented with a complete range of stereotypes — one talking A&R, drug deal dealer and hot publicity girl. Of course, it also has its share of offbeat, colorful characters, like girl legend Futura 2000 and rapper Mr Dead playing a pragmatic crack dealer. But Crooked simultaneously documents the music and culture of WordSound Records, the label responsible for the Crooklyn Dub Consortium series, Prince Paul's scathing Psychoanalysis album and three of Sensational's albums, and it's packaged with a strong soundtrack to accompany the DVD. As a veteran of the HipHop genre, Sensational embodies WordSound's experimental attitude. In fact, from his first appearance as Torture on The Jungle Brothers' 1993 album *J Beez Wit The Remedy* to his most recent appearance alongside Prince Paul and Automator on the Hardest Boy Modeling School album, he's the most prolific rapper you've never heard. Yet, as his mumbled, maddened recordings suggest, he's not the most cinematic presence, and it's difficult to adjust to the subtleties of his story detachment and arcane aesthetic of film.

Crooked the movie might stumble through on its amateurism — bad acting, awkward shots,

loose narrative — but it does locate a context for WordSound's brooding experimental rhythms. Called from his three albums, Sensational's contributions are consistently jarring and distorted, revealing a remarkable aesthetic focus and conviction. He's not about to make himself more user-friendly; half of the Camp Lo rap disc, contributes "Gonna Self," the movie's most abrupt and thus somewhat dog-eared HipHop tune. Less Lamont's drum "n' bass finds a perfect context in a subway chase scene — persuasive, cold and fast. Other than Sensational, WordSound's most distinct trademarks are piddling dubby beatscapes, most notably Spickee's haunting quasi-Industrial breakbeats, which compellingly invoke an NYC urban dread. Anti-Pop Consortium's "Sugar Worm" — one of two exclusive tracks on the soundtrack — is performed in the dub scene described earlier. Lost in angular rhythms and blippy beats, its members look downright mainstream next to Sensational. But what's missing from Crooked that gives similar movies, like *Rockers* and *Wild Style*, their timelessness are more live scenes. Other than the initial Consortium and Sensational performances, we only get a few budget videos by Sensational. The rest of the soundtrack plays in the background. It might portray a more isolated New York City than the intensely friendly community projected in *Wild Style*, but Crooked gives an honest and bizarrely charming glimpse into the deep recesses of NYC's musical underground circa 2001. (W)

You would have thought that the triple gold/old CD was one of the decadent excesses that Alec Empire railed against on those dark Berlin evenings trying to bring down the fatherland and the rock establishment. Yet here he is on **DEET F\*\*K With Us** (Digital Hardcore Recordings DHRS3 CD) announcing that Berlin is dead and that the real revolution is happening in America across 66 tracks of some of the latest Techno Metal you've ever heard. Don't F\*\*K With Us collects recordings from a ragtag bunch of digital hardcore bands from across the US and Canada who sail their blazing beats with screaming guitars, hopelessly obvious movie samples, computer sear and ESI jaggedness. There's the odd track that isn't immediately offensive (though nothing that hasn't been done a billion lat better by labels like Arminjah, Prisms or Industrial Strength), but mostly this is the music of the worst kind (a particular shame

given Empire's history), proving you don't have to be a ponytailed taxi cab playing Bach apogees to be blasted. (PS)

Coming out of Rockland County, New York, wrapped in a found art sleeve, **Angels & Insects** (Meridian Sound Network MMR001 CD) is a strange, mysterious and rather wonderful little compilation of underground HipHop concerned with, well, angels and insects. The consistent on subject matter gives this comp a tighter focus than mere stylistic gimmicks and is responsible for gems like *Reed* The 5th's clever rehashing of Whiplash's favorite slang term "buggin'." Imperious "I dropped some West Nile shit/you shook like you mosquito bit" and *West Air's* "All that gangsta maggot shit/That's puberty created by society to keep you in one place/That's why I sit in my cocoon and bloom/Reach other things like over space." The beats — sometimes celestial, sometimes sticky and dry — by members of The Ament Family, Weightless, Golden Monkeys and Was Poetic crews are just as good as the words. (PS)

25 years after his death, Robert Johnson was all but a forgotten regional blues musician. Another 25 years after that, they would have dug him up to give him a Grammy. Gap, then, to link him from our memory those better known, so-called cafe or so-called blues musicians like Josh White, Big Boy Broeky and the man who really forms the keystone of the 20th century jukebox, Huddie Ledbetter. Leadbetter Catfish do it again with their budget three CD set on the most central of American folk blues artists, whose early work was actually targeted too late back at a black audience when "lost" records had moved on to a more sophisticated level. For those who found the recent canonization of Charlie Patton puzzling then one listen to the first CD of the anthology **The Definitive Leadbetter** (Catfish KAUZ20 3CD) provides the real source for much of post-war popular music, from Linné Donagan to Nirvana, Cyrl Smith's Alatars, the Stones, Dylan, Van Morrison and The Byrds to The Red Hot Chili Peppers. Even for those familiar with the incredible breadth of this musician, this compilation still comes over as a revelation. (SB)

Matthew Johnson's *Message* (label Fat Possum) has upset more than a few blues purists with their successful search for the raw blues. Although the label has had a few excellent compilations already, their name will no doubt become more recognized with the release of the soundtrack to **Big Bad Love** (Nonesuch

755979637 CD), a new movie directed by Arless Howard and produced by Debra Winger. Tracks from *RL Rainside* (including a cover of Dylan's "Everything Is Broken"), Junior Kimbrough, Ade Payton and newcomer to the label Kenny Brown, sit alongside two new tracks from Tom Waits, one beauty from Steve Earle and, perhaps most remarkably, two from Tom Waits. Notable for being absolutely in control, his "Steepwalkin'" is a slow blues drag from 1991, while "Spiritual" was recorded in collaboration with the Kronos Quartet. The movie cannot hope to match the soundtrack. (SB)

Contrasting to chart the rapidly expanding frontiers of modern electronic art and sound design, **Bip-Hop Generation Volume 5** (Bip-Hop BLEEP13 CD) delves further into the art of confounding expectations by starting off with the lost recording made by American Techno artist Chris Jolly as Accorion Creek, a gloriously asymmetrical construction that prepares the way for the shimmer and haze of "Alphabetica" from Canada's Andrew Daks. Sweden's Mikael Stawstrom and UK interactive through visionary Anne help keep things strange while Germany's Rechenstrom conveys a magnificently jagged funk on "De Japen Du Buren", leaving France's D'berwille, aka Bip-Hop graphic designer Julien Berthier, to close the set with three dark compositions of his own. (KH)

Those who prattle things tend to stand the better chance of being caught out by surprise. **This Is Not The 80s** (INCREDIBLE 5079632 2CD), having already upset its mind pretty early about what it's not, comes loaded with them. An expansive and intriguing selection of material spawned languidly over two CDs, this offers fresh insights into the electro renaissance. From the latest in mid-generation Detroit Techno to the broth old world charms of Talco Disco, New York Art house give and London runway chic, this delights in blending the familiar with the mutated. With 40 tracks to choose from, take your stand and redefine your position to such standards as Kitten And The Hacker's deadpan take on The Eurythmics' "Sweet Dreams," the indie soul vision of Detroit Grand Funkes' "After School Session," the classic "Problems D'Amour" by Alexander Robotnik (well, actually, this is the 80s) and the rather new narrative hunk of Anthony Royster's "Sex With Hackers." Tomorrow just won't go away. (KH) [

Reviewed by Steve Barker, Ken Holings, Peter Shapiro and Jon Weiten



# The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound



Microphone to the jazz: Catfish's Matt Black (left), Becken (left) at the greenhouse Bluegrass Society Park (background) in 1978

Microphoning from the gutter, most days flip up over to con rancorists in anger into the grinders of House — well they have a better idea than Genesis P. Orridge — (Blackpool's *Wavelength 25* are, inevitably, one of the groups of this very post-punk moment. Their reputation among the American dance fraternity begins and ends with the Megatons of "Looking From A Window" and a 1985 concert at New York's The Max. Rocking floors from Donkeritz to the Vintrose with a little help from Bernard Turner and A Certain Ratio's Donald Johnson. It's along from A Hilltop (Megatons) was almost the farewell to that wonderful time in the Big Apple, when everyone aside from the Springsteen/John Caffery & The Beaver Brown Band meadthes was listening to the same music. In cascading drums and viscerally angular bass cut just like a Latin Rascals edit track and its synth sound inspired Joy Belton to produce an album in 1990. Of course, it still sounds resolutely modern now, but it's "Program For Light", from the same 1984 album. From The Hip (ITM UTM2314 CD), that really sounds like the precursor of House and Techno. It's the same as the same as the same. It's the same as the same, pulling dread/normans as most post-Detroit techno. From The Hip is the group's masterpiece, particularly in this expanded package, with three mixes of "Hilltop" and two each of "Dirty Disco II" and "Seating Heat" (perhaps the first sighting of the Roland TB-303 squelch that would become the trademark of Acid House).

From The Hip — in The Flesh Live In America 1985 (ITM UTM2325 CD) unfortunately doesn't include anything from their show at the Ritz bar, strangely for such studio-intense music, it sounds even more present than the album. Although the vocals are maddled to high, the baseline of "Looking From A Hilltop" is that much more intense, and the guitar riffs more like a serrated knife cutting through a rusty can.

"Beneath The Blade" has an almost Don-ah-dell, while "Program For Light" is like the Run DMX/Heroin-style wire re-created by Wankel DJ/producer and Gang Of Four. Unfortunately, after this tour drummer and programers Van Cassidy and Lee Shallos and vocals/keyboards Angela Flowers left the group, leaving only husband and wife Larry and Jenny Cassidy. The resulting *Love & Hate (In The English Countryside)* (ITM UTM2318 CD) is what you'd expect of a mid-80s electronic group left

haunting, shadowy power pop, dumpy Kraftwerkisms and a Sate cover that even William Orbit would consider too gauche. Deus Ex Machina (ITM UTM2316 CD) collects some studio sketches and live recordings from around the time the group decided to crawl out of the mire and some live recordings from just before their break-up. The tracks from The Hacienda in 1983 are interesting if you're into Peter Hook tribute groups, but otherwise this is best left to the canon cars. (PS)

And the mural of the Section 25 story? Sure. "Looking From A Hilltop" got their notice, but their 15 minutes in the NYC sun didn't amount to shit in the final reckoning. Sadly, their disco dreams seem crumbled into dust, leaving behind the grime trademarks of their first two albums, *Always Now* (ITM UTM2308 CD) and *The Key Of Dreams* (ITM UTM2302 CD). Section 25 were always more convivial at being grim than they were playing peroxide-electro bunnies for the post-punk funk set. Besides, they just couldn't hide the punk jet handsonomy shaped skull beneath bassist and singer Larry Cassidy's skin — always there to remind them of the rarity of music in the face of the human mortality — nor should they wait 20 years before the Drome, their best-dressed moments of suffering were thoughtlessly dismissed as second-rate Joy Division. Highlight judges them more kindly. The wind-dust skins of their blasted guitar harmonics and skittered electronics gaudily cling to their songs' skeletal frames on their *Always Now* debut, produced by Martin Hannett. With telltale titles like "Babies In The Bands", their Buddha's interests hang heavy over these early strings. But, combining a bass-led ground with a characteristic growling vocal, "Charnel Ground" succinctly pins down Section 25's pre-disco appeal. For *Key Of Dreams* they worked up some mesmerizing trance vehicles, such as "The Beast" and the 15 minute "Sator", by pounding out barely embellished, bass-heavy dubrock riffs like they were spinning Tibetan prayer wheels. String-whispering their motorbikes into perpetual motion, they'd also written a series of luscious, sprawling, blaring harmonies pitched somewhere between Public Image and The Godfathers' *Dark Star*. Their jams are evoked a little further on *Live In America & Europe 1982* (ITM UTM2312 CD), but set far enough to allow the pain of the group's gradual wits. (HK)

The projected 10x10 set of the complete and remastered recordings of the infamously dur-

Czech underground group **Plastic People Of The Universe** has just been bolstered by the release of two further volumes from the Prague based label, Globus Music. This brings the total count up to eight CDs so far, and when complete, the set as a whole will include around four hours of previously unreleased material. The first of the new releases, Volume II, is a neatly edited down version of the group's best known recording, 1974's Egon Bondy's *Happy Hearts Club Banned*. This roughly hewn gem was the first PPU recording to see the light of day in the West, having been smuggled out of Czechoslovakia and released without the group's knowledge by the French SCOPA Invisible Productions imprint in 1978. As underground documents go, this one is without equal. Though primitively recorded, it is inventively constructed around a series of looping rhythmic repetitions overlaid with semi-spoken or chanted words, and the odd incision of folk melody and primitive synth equal by which it continually details expectations and takes it beyond a mere Eastern European take on a Kraut/Punk hybrid. As the title suggests, the lyrics derive almost exclusively from the poetry of Czech socialist poet Egon Bondy, whose driven, occasionally despondent and frequently scatological verses lace the whole album, with an edgy sense of defiant humor, before that, it, things become just defiant. This release includes these additional 'studio' versions of tracks that appeared on the 1976-77 live recording *Arch 25 Střih Hanební* (Oh Dishonour To The State), giving an eerie presentation to the circumstances that would land some members of the group with lengthy prison sentences, and which in turn would provide the catalyst to the formation of Charter 77.

Winding forward over a decade to the group's final album (bearing a couple of live reunion CDs), Volume X presents the more electronic strains of 1985's *Půlnocní Mys* (Midnight Mouse). And together with the original album, this volume also includes PPU's very last session, the wholly unrepresentative 23 minute *Půlnocní* (Temptation) from 1986, which was recorded as an accompaniment to the Vienna premiere of Václav Havel's play of the same name. Although the latter provides a somewhat desultory epilogue to their career, *Půlnocní Mys* itself is not without interest, particularly in its attempts to weld some charmingly primitive electronics in the service of the group's rhythmic core. Like its predecessor, 1984's *Havel Půlnocní* (Beetlestranger), the album was recorded free

then the gaudy gaze of PPU's saxophonist Václav Bárabek (who had defected under mounting state harassment to Austria and then Canada in 1982). Without Bárabek, Václav Havel had come to take an increasing role in the selection of the lyrics (drawing from the poetry of Ivan Vnřanský, Karel Hynek Macha, Milan Hájek and Christian Morgenstern). As such, Bondy's sole contribution on the final PPU album is reduced to the line, "Young girls, young girls, young girls", and with it, a sense that the defiance, humor, awe and tenacity that marked the PPU's best recordings were gone. As with the previous six volumes, the extensive sleeveboxes accompanying these releases are entirely in Czech. Fortunately, however, for the linguistically challenged amongst us, to coincide with these present volumes Globus has also issued an English translation of the Plastic People Of The Universe book. This neat little hardback sells for the price of a CD and contains forewords by both Egon Bondy and PPU manager/artist director Ivan Jirous, and is composed of a detailed chronology, a full discography, plenty of illustrations, and translations of the complete PPU lyrics, making an invaluable companion to the lives and recorded works of this remarkable group. (SR)

For all the revolutionist/hutiorist/paradigmatic claims made on its behalf, the art of The DJ mix is as stagnant and tired as the guitar solo. The same old poses, the same old tricks and breakdowns, the same old choruses. It's only a matter of time before the first superstar DJ moves to Monte Carlo to become a tax exile. It's no wonder, then, that the only interesting mixes these days are coming from laptop brats mashing up their favourite records with some cheap software. With the best standard mix tapes of recent times coming from this scene (Seoul's rather fab *Two Many DJs*), the re-release of *Coldest Of The Mind* Of Madness (Journeys By DJ JOURSD04 CD) stands as a salutary reminder of what the mix is supposed to be about: audacious juxtapositions, breaths of styles and tempos, sick edits, "taking you on a journey," weaving the dancefloor moving, even throwing in some smooth ones so the couples can slow dance. That this is still the best commercially available mix tape ever seven years after its original release is an insult. Will someone please do something about it. (PS) □ Reviewed by Billa Kopf, Stephen Robinson and Peter Shapiro



member before it flew to Hiroshima in WWII. He crouches under a sculpture installation made from concrete tubes. He examines an abandoned wooden chest and an armchair, both being toyed with in that tactile, semi-hysterical manner that often characterizes the world's activity. As an appendix to the album, *Smallworld* generates rapid rhythmic pulses from the huffing and sneezing of a toilet door in Berlin, and from cheating football fans in LA's Airport.

*Smallworld* is an experienced computer composer and improvising musician, who specializes in playing 10-inches steel pan through electronics. He resists the temptation to over-dramatize his music, and everything on the album offers an unforced yet interesting listening experience. If I enjoyed "Debris" and "Wind turns" most, it's because they are anchored by rich drones, and they present environmental recordings with relatively little intervention from Smellworld himself. Once he starts "composing" with the material, leaving it up to create informal intensity, or keeping a rattling rhythm, I feel slightly cheated, as the minimalist composer is standing between me and the soundscape. Here is the dilemma of the environmental recordist: what you create with that recording may not be as fascinating as the original sound. Hearing "Tegan Chen" for example, let me insist: to know what the football chint actually sounded like.

*Smellworld's* album is on the Deep Listening label run by Pauline Oliveros's Foundation. The label is listening for what the ear does not know, runs the tag on the foundation's headed tape recorder. It may be childish to suggest that Smellworld may have done less composing and let us lose ourselves in his desert recordings, but the listening is deepest when he does just that.

# **THE TÖDLICHE DORIS KINDERLINGERLEIHEN FÜR WAHREN TROST DES GRLS** PSYCHODELIC PRO 02 CD

BY JIM HAYNES

In the early 1980s, a highly vocal faction of Berlin's post-punk community began marking out its own territory somewhere between the absolute intensity of Einstürzende Neubauten and Sprung Aus Den Wolken, and the 'delirium' of the aforementioned Enkeltöchter Neubauten's Biss Bängel. Malena's precursors Manu D and the punklike pranksters of Die Tödlische Doris (whose name, The Deadly Doris, is a pun on the German for 'lizard dose'). Emerging as the most idiosyncratic of these believers in carnivalesque cacophony, Doris set out to implode mundane objects, sounds and signifiers through an extreme decentralization of the self. She had no singular strategy worked out to achieve that goal: instead, she presented herself as a porous totality of alienations who happily switched or mixed media on whims. Doris's activities ranged across live art, postcard art, film montages, performance and happenings. Focusing much of her activity in baroque art and performance sadly meant she lost too few recordings behind her when she ceased operations in 1987 and the trinity constituting her — Wolfgang Müller, Kitha Kruse and the late Nikolaus Amthor — each went on to pursue their highly idiosyncratic ways. As a consequence, it's easy to forget just how

good Doris's music could be.

Fortunately, the obscure archives at Psychodisc P/L (who were responsible in unearthing the Neustadtshaus audio from the United Dairies vaults) have published an excellent introduction to the Tödlische Doris's rarely heard music, collecting mostly unreleased and live recordings from 1980-85. The collection makes it immediately apparent that Doris often developed her absurd gestures with specific conceptually oriented points in mind. In one instance, Müller and Ullrich turned the sounds from a cassette left out for the garbage into a scolarious parody of the Normans' "Warm Leathertune", orchestrated from garbled tape. Doris's ensembles vocal delivery makes the original sound downright scoult.

Commissioned to compose music for the Charlottenburg Fashion Boutique, Doris hired three professional musicians from the Louvre exchange to play combat waiters, complemented by her humble noises which sounded like a filing cabinet being scraped across concrete. Furthermore in 1981, Doris devised a whimsical concept to run for a position in the Berlin Senate, promising to hand over her parliamentary seat to her sister (also named Die Tödlische Doris) in the event of her abusing her power. The tape she manufactured to "boost" her popularity featured snip-py as magically naive as anything The young Marie Curie ever came up with. Alas, Doris didn't make it to senate.

Die Tödlische Doris was capable of taking up the rock pose, if only to accentuate her clumsiness. "Tanz Im Quadrat" recorded live in Paris in 1982 adds an unrelentingly simple drum strike to a quirky electronic melody directly related to a polka. She could just as quickly change the mood towards the punk slugging of "Der bid Ein Skandal", a tremendous song that decries (in German), "the machine's Anarchy/We are all its hostages", over an unrelenting skiddish beat, monstrous industrial ruck and intense feedback. Between the CD's 26 tracks and informative sleeve notes illuminating the artist, a hidden treasure emerges from Doris's diverse concepts, through which she set out to dismantle art's preconceptions.

# **LUKE VIBERT FURTHER NUGGETS LO RECORDINGS LO201 CD** **BBC RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP DR WHO: MUSIC FROM THE TENTH PLANET CCHRE CDH0650 CD**

# **DR WHO AT THE BBC RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP VOL. 3: THE LEISURE HIVE WMLP 00552 CD** **VOL. 4: MEGLOS AND FULL CIRCLE WMLP 00553 CD** BY KEN HOLLINGS

As anyone who witnessed the exuberant babble of a set presented by Graham Massey's big band project, Reithed, at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall recently will already understand, the only thing 'easy' about Easy Listening is the assumption that it's concerned exclusively with notions of ironic distance. Like Massey, Luke

Vibert has a genuine, unblatant enthusiasm for the kind of music that usually gets recorded without a name; the audio casts, ingenious, low budget studio arrangements and broadly sketched themes that comprise the library music archives of the world. Its second collection, following on from last summer's release, is a fabulously jumbled collage of material from the 1960s and 1970s. Like a mass bag of musical candy, early excursions into electronics, such as the warped velocities and squeak-like space-spices of John Methews' "Electro-Aggression" lie right next to the mean fuzzed urban blues of Richard Demarco's "Remembering Bly" and the openly soaring brass of Johnny Scott's "Rise The Sun".

Scattered amongst this brightly coloured assortment are pieces by established French arranger Jack Weil, a couple of characteristically assured sketches by Johnny Hawksworth and some intriguingly hallucinatory contributions from Roger Rapp, whose "Black Oil" opens Cchre Records' selection of themes used in the 1966 Dr Who adventure, The Tenth Planet. An eerily familiar arrangement for scabbing brass, it's a welcome nod to the vintage pop and Orchestral Manoeuvres, this composition has absorbed more than a few adventures into the unknown. Equally strange and disturbing is the revelation of how much library material the BBC drew on in their early Dr Who productions. Even Ron Granger's famous signature tune, as realised by the late, great Dewi Derbyshire was made to serve for the first 17 years of the show's existence, any subsequent alterations being made on copies of the original master. It's not surprising to discover, therefore, that The Tenth Planet welcomed the dreaded Cybermen onto British television screens to the accompaniment of predominantly orchestral music written up to five years previously. The heavy tape echo, drums and electric keyboards of Martin Sklar's three part "Space Adventure", recorded in 1964, are about as close to the Cybermen's impenetrable, technologically enhanced skin as the music ever got.

If the series' adventures like The Leisure Hive, Meglos and Full Circle were being recorded for broadcast in the early 1980s, the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop had gone modular and was providing all the incidental music for the series. Volumes Three and Four of material taken from their sound archives is largely dictated to the work of Peter Howell and Paddy Kingsland, whose work displays a rigorously pragmatic approach, having the precise shifts in mood and pace usually associated with the live piano accompaniment to a silent movie. Although clearly delineated and meticulously realised, these expansive compositions, when presented without dialogue or narrative detail, often reveal far too much information about themselves. Far more gripping is Volume Three's collection of electronic sound effects created by Dick Mills for all three stories. It's a disturbing accumulation of moans, impressions and stark noises that, like the best library music, make shivering virtues out of their very functionality.

# **MICHAEL YONKERS BAND MICROMINIATURE LOVE DE BUTL NO NUMBER LP**

BY BYRON GOLEY

De Styl Records has a rep for uncovering lost outsider classics from the psychedelic

underground. Two years ago, they released a wild, Red Krayola-like LP by Citizens For Interpretatory Activity, the tapes for which had been languishing in the archives of Fluxus film maker, Jack Yolkst. Now they're stocked down an unissued 1968 album by a Minnesota musician whose oddball folk work was known by a few fringe collectors, but whose faithful rock recordings had never really seen the light of day.

In the fall of 1968 Michael Yonkers was leading a trio, featuring himself on vocals, guitar and homemade electronics. His record's song model was the Michael Bloomfield/Evin Bishop line-up of the mid-60s Paul Butterfield Blues Band, but the only thing this Minneapolis group had in common with their Chicago brethren was a predilection for guitar raunch. Yonkers built his own distortion units and they create sounds that are truly fucked. There are tracks here where the guitar sounds more like the Silver Apples' Sirens than anything else. Yonkers' lyrics also display some of the Silver Apples' schizoid surrealism, but the primitive thrust of the trio's arrangements gives Microminiatures (love a garage hatch that the Apples could never touch).

But the real reason for the majestic strangeness of the record lays in its die-wired guitar tones, treated vocals and dawning drone. Supposedly the group's live shows were skull-crushing nets of scree and wails, the stakes in the liner notes are great. There's even a good one from improviser Mike Fine (who played with Yonkers in the early 70s) about a gig with balloons and baby powder. And Fine never tells good stories, so even jabsos may warm check this one out.

# **RICHARD YOUNGS MAY**

YAGAGOWAR JAGAS CD  
BY DOUGLAS WOLK

Richard Youngs may be a minimalist, but that doesn't mean he's as ascetic — he just likes giving each moment a bit of space. Like 1998's *Superficial*, May barely lets the voice of representative's recorder play and singing, the time, he's doubled the number of songs to six, and it feels like an indulgence. After the slick, glacial opener, "Heaven Winter", sung so slowly it's nearly impossible to make out, Youngs settles into spare plucking and laid, reserved melodies, with faint echoes of early 70s British folk-rock (his phrasing is very Sandy Denny) and of Pearls Before Swine. He's far more sympathetic than his sources, though. Each song is allotted one repeated guitar line and one snitch of melody (though a few sneak back for extra); most of May's lyrics orbit, tightly or loosely, around a few sets of rhymes — "Tat/air" and "wind/mind/time" — and shuffle the rest of their words around repeatedly until they yield some sort of impression, if not actual sense. Youngs is an unconfident gifted and an uneasy singer, but performance of this sort doesn't do him justice. The next part to be as characteristic: he mixes himself so closely that you can hear every breath and every sibilant-flick, and hear every note's decay. Intimacy is the point of the exercise, but it can be irritating, especially when he's inventing impenetrable lines like "you're winding all the time" with tremulous fervency. As the album progresses, though, you can hear Youngs warming to the pressures and capabilities of his own voice, which is a pleasure itself. □

# Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

## CHRIS BROKAW RED CITIES 1991/0155 CD

Chris Brokaw was a member of Cocteau, whose 1991 *Frigid Stars* LP stands as one of the most inimitable hardcore records of that decade, before he teamed up with Live Skull's Thilo Zidek as the everything but organic Cocteau. His first solo album, *Red Cities*, contains a series of brooding instrumental sketches propelled by epic percussion and dominated by his skeletal guitar sound, which at points recalls The Dwarfs' Column's *Vini Really Coming* over like incidental music from an unriveted film, the pieces work more as moodsetters than anything that really stands up to repeat listening. However, the highly evocative, treble-intensive, *The Fields* (Part 2), "takes you on a moonlit stroll through some blasted desert rock that is as semingly and lonesome as some of John Fahey's later electric material.

## CONSONANT CONSONANT PENNY 90029 CD

Mission Of Burma were an incendiary presence in Boston in the early 1980s, who dynamited form and welded scotlessly convoluted poetry to helicopter basslines and epileptic guitar. Bassist and co-songwriter Clint Conley penned some of their most spectacular material, including the scotoposethically beautiful "What's When I Reach For My Revolver," a track that has since been imitated by Moby. No doubt bemused by his posthumous acclaim, Conley has started writing again and *Consonant*, recorded by Sheila's Bob Weston, is the result. Chris Brokaw (that man again) helped him work through his new material, and drummer Matt Kadane and bassist Weston Branan complete the group. Rather than mess with the basic blueprint, his *Consonant* songs are old-fashioned out with a heavier, rhytmic, lacking Moby's dynamics aside, however, *Consonant* tracks soon blur into a wall of monotonous, chugging bar chords. But "Blissful" recalls the psychedelic underpinnings that subtly altered hardcore's DNA in earlier Conley pieces like "Academy Fight Song".

## DAVIS REDFORD TRIAD THE MYSTICAL PATH OF THE NUMBER EIGHTY SIX HOP MOUNTAIN 8055 CD

The Davis Redford Triad are an American quartet, fronted by guitarist Steven Wye Lobdel, the man responsible for the mesmerizing six string fury that topped off Faust's ill-fated "comeback" album *Five*. The Mystical Path Of The Number Eighty Six was first released on vinyl by Hop Mountain in 1997, following Lobdel's release from a mental institution, where he had been incarcerated after a series of Philip K. Dick-like episodes. This remixed new edition restores a couple of tracks that mysteriously disappeared during the compilation of the original vinyl. Played back to back with the original album, the difference is staggering. The very version's vaguely whiney guitar tone gives way to an amped-up sound that recalls the blizzard

electronic fug of Japanese heavyweights like King Harris or the late Masayuki Miyazaki. Combined with space junk electronics, this gloriously restored disc stands as one of the great monolithic blowouts of recent years.

## GRATEFUL DEAD DICK'S PICKS VOL 24: 2/3/1974 GRATEFUL DEAD GDCD0444 24CD

As the place where they debuted their faded, monstrous *Wall of Sound* PK in spring 1974, the Del Rey City Cow Palace, California is one of the more iconic landmarks in The Dead's history. Designed by their acid guru soundman Dweez Stanley aka The Bear, it erected the entire PA system in a monstrous bank of speakers and amplifiers behind the group, so they could hear and mix themselves. On record, the sound is indeed astounding, but such clarity is a qualified blessing when Donna Godchaux shrieks faux soul graffiti across the soundwall or Bob Harris' "Playing in the Band," if crystalline sound distortion happens to obscure density of group coming up to them, it undeniably adds their group-wild song destractions that preoccupy The Dead's most transcendental moments— which here occur in the warped serges of "Playing in the Band," "Under the Sun" and "Bornie Dotsen's Morning Dew," with the Wall of Sound giving guitarist Jerry Garcia's falling featherlike trails in and out of the pen's apocalyptic slide towards extinction. (Biba Kopf)

## LANDING SEASONS BA DA BING! BING0033 CD

Seasons is a great Technicolor wash of cut of sync psychedelic Byrdsong and vague Country-jungo, with its male and female vocals rising up in front of the speakers like breath on a cold day. The way the music constantly sounds like it's radiating into the distance recalls early sides by Flying Saucer Attack; and the atmosphere is heavy with the kind of lyrical staves that defines Low's best work. From Connecticut, Landing come out of a collaborative scene that includes the psychologic groups Yuma Bites, Surface Of Ecos and Windy & Carl. Like Windy & Carl, they're also founded on a husband and wife tagteam— Aaron and Adrienne Sear. Landing's music is correspondingly incredibly personal, even as it appears to an enigmatic drift.

## MAHER SHALAL HAZ BAZ MAHER ON WATER GEOGRAPHIC GEG016 CD

Consisting of five new tracks recorded at Tokyo's Peace Music studio alongside some hallelu-live cuts, the *Maier On Water EP* sees Tom Rudin's art and orchestra illuminated in glorious hi-fi. The opening "Shalal In The River" is one of his most disarmingly beautiful pop songs, with euphoric notes bobbing like a cork around Rieko Kudo's first, unashamed backing vocals. "Chickadees in the Sky" sounds like Jay Byrd's United States Of America relocated to a Northern Japanese commune, while "Crossing The Tama River" captures that lumbering, miniature brassband

sound that lies at the heart of Kudo's recent work. The two tracks are just as enigmatic, especially "Good Morning," which dissolves into an abstract code that recalls Harry Partch's visionary environments. If the music sometimes sounds like it's leeching on the edge of total collapse, it's because Kudo remains absolutely determined to bend the players and their instruments to fit his own idiosyncratic vision. The resulting set radiates with painstaking, deliberately imperfect beauty.

## ARCHER PREWITT THREE THRILL JOCKEY THRILL108 CD

Archer Prewitt's skewed pop clearly references the golden age of the tastefully orchestrated singer-songwriter. His sparse, precise arrangements, with dry, untheatrical strings and subtle brass, look back to a time when bargain bins across the world overflowed with countermelancholic Roodies albums. Prewitt is the guitarist for The Sins And Cars as well as the band. He also drove the Bay Star pop for underground comic publishers Drawn And Quarterly. Three, his first solo album for Thrill Jockey, feels curiously out of place on the label, its sawily assembled cut band pop is a bit incongruous rubbing shoulders with Tortoise, Fred Anderson and the Chicago Underground set, and as a result it is most likely lost to the audience that would most appreciate it. Vocally Prewitt sounds a bit like American Muse: Club's Mark Eitzel without the world-weariness, though he occasionally feels back on a power pop delivery so keen, it is almost painful.

## PUKA PUKA BRIANS LOVE WARRIOR SHARKBARK CD

Puka Puka Brians are a Japanese group absorbed by the art punnery found on UK groups like The Swell Maps and The Fall. They're led by multi-instrumentalist Sayo and Uno, who recently toured the UK with Maher Shalal Haz Baz. They have also played in Keji Haruo's Ateyo. While Puka Puka Brians' modus operandi is never quite as formally faked as either of these other projects, their psychologic songforms are subtly undermined by counter rhythms, seussifying bass and primitive acid guitar, recalling some of the most beautifully freed outsider music of the past few decades. Not for nothing do they namecheck Roy Lichtenstein and The Television Personalities' Dan Treacy. Indeed, a euphoric feeling of joy in creation runs throughout the set, shot through with an edge of the world adrenaline rush on auto-destructive tracks like "Vespene" and "Two Card [sic] Wonder".

## STEVEN R SMITH LINEAMENTS EMPEROR JONES EAST CD

Multi-instrumentalist Steven R Smith produces cinematic soundtrack work in the maverick tradition of Harry Partch, Loren Mazzacane Connors and Ronan Friel. Here he maps out epic topographies over eight tracks of woozy

layered guitar, electric piano and various sound inventions. Previously a member of West Coast soundscapers Mera, he still plays out as part of morning, free improvisers Thugs (see the Wire 215) who create great informal forms from the ghost of electricity. But his solo landscaping lacks the spontaneity of these groups. Vague and unambitious, it's defined by an air of slight melancholy generated by instruments that slowly accrue sonic detail. It does have several illuminating moments, when its distant dunes speak of vast American space as eloquently as Roy Connard's mesmerizing bow work, but for the most part Smith's music lacks the immediately defensible thumpiness of his peers.

## TRANS AM TA THRILL JOCKEY THRILL109 CD

In an ever changing world, it's good to know there are some things you can always count on, and Trans Am's singalongish pursuit of the pop party is just one of them. From their tracks as a streamlined power trio through their current guise as electro studio rockers, they've ruthlessly mixed every undertheated genre in search of kudos. Here, it seems their boldness their bottom end and with some warped 1980s electro that references everything from Gary Numan and The Cars through "Jump" as Van Halen. Putting the boys covered in chains and juggling bottomers, the cover shot is a hoot. But the biggest charm comes with the addition of vocals, with all three players romancing the microphone. Like John Denslow of The Velvet Monkeys at their grossest, Trans Am's genre exercises don't stand up to close scrutiny, but as a dim soundtrack to your next best bust, you might want to bring it on.

## WILCO YANKEE HOTEL FOXTROT NONESUCH 75590669 CD

Matching anemic alt-country doubtfully/Billy Bragg collaborators Wilco with avant-whizzed Jim O'Rourke makes for one of the most bizarre hook-ups of recent years. Exactly what his O'Rourke does here? He might have missed *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* at John McEntire's Soda Studio in Chicago, but the new Wilco record sounds much like the old Wilco record: resolutely unmemorable songs delivered by a vocalist determined to work a little horse emotion into the delivery of the slightest irony. The connection was possibly fostered by new drummer Glenn Kotche, who is also a member of O'Rourke's group, making this collaboration the logical extension of his recent headlong dive into Americana. The opening "I Am Trying To Break Your Heart" makes the proposition almost workable in the way the music breaks another from the melody line, only to hover ominously above it. The rest is so ordinary that the cut almost make out the players indulging to each other while they lay down chords, mundane exercises as "Pot Kettle Black" and "Tie Me Man Who Loves You". Yankee Hotel Foxtrot's faceless, scrubbed production takes you back to the dead days of 1970s NDR radio. □

# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

## CLOSER MUSIK

KOMPACT KOMPACT 135 CD/200P

Closer Musik's first single for Kompakt featured the gorgeous "One Two Three (No Gravity)," a simple stunner composed from midrange organ, melted guitars and a dry, echoing monotone vocal, all set over a deep thudding kick drum. Their debut album keeps the minimalist tempo, but while it doesn't entirely bury the emotive quotient, it makes it a hell of a lot more oblique. The opening "Closer Dancer" sets the tone for the album with shuddering electro-techno rhythms and vocals that shuffle between a whisper and a growl. Instrumentals like "Ride," "Gigante" and "Mr" follow suit, employing spare Acid washes and brittle rhythm lines. "You Don't Know Me" is even darker, thanks to rained basslines and spookily suspenseful lyrics. But the duo of Ken Leykis and Andreas Agazzi show their sensitive side with "Wunder," which turns over and over like a misty sleeper, tangled in counterpoint sheets of bass and weighted down with a morose blanket of melody.

## CLUSTER VS JOHN TEJADA MORE GDM VOL 1

TEIGERLUSH TIGERLUSH 12"

"More GDM" stands for "More God-Damned Music," the tongue-in-cheek slogan of Paris's Tigerlusch Records. The branch of Jochen Bouzakis (aka Jochen Loe) and Charles Hagelstein, Tigerlusch began as www.tigerlusch.com, a Website devoted to the history of electronic music. It's appropriate, then, that their first release features a 28 year old track from Krautrockers Cluster, as well as a brand new offering from LA's pacific John Tejada. Despite the "Jesus" in the title, there's no controversy here. Cluster's "Hollywood," released on 1974's Zerkowit! LP, takes the shape of a pyramid, starting with a rocksteady drum machine pattern, over which rises an unstable series of overdriven, echo-laden guitar repetitions. The structure peaks with a searing synthesizer lead that seems to shatter wherever it strikes in eerie, psychedelic lighting. While it's not the Rosetta Stone of techno, there are certainly traces of dance music's prehistory here. Tejada's "Present Tense" echoes the Cluster track, however unconsciously, layering similarly hued keyboards over an upbeat breakbeat rhythm. Tejada has never stuck to any particular sound in his recordings; for Plug Research, deEcoff and the rest, and this cheeky side of new wave flavored House sees him continuing to play hypothesis with styles.

## DIBABA

### FLOW MY TEARS, THE DJ SAID

WOLFLIT WOLFLIT 12"

The sedating title track, courtesy of Stockholm newcomer Oie Conner, is one of those tunes that has you running across the floor to transport shamelessly in the DJ booth. It's built simply but perfectly from appling cosmic, radiant keys and a bluesy drum wall that splats you in two every time — and the growling organ line whips up and

down like a zipper imploded right above your head. "From My Window At Night" is a strong, heavy, orientalist chamber reminiscent of Massive Attack, while "Open 82" is a sleek, gritty techno of the Metro Area school, only ten shades darker

## SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS

### DAP DIPPIN' WITH...

DAPKING DAPKING CD/CD

Produced by Arabal's Gabriel Roth, this just might be the best document of the 'keep it groovy' retro-funk movement. But how do you review the damn thing? Versatitudes? Well, from the Kingly cover (complete with incorrect back listing) and once Baby Grapz doing his best Dainy Ray to the St Vincent's Latinisms moans Bed Medicine's genre of "Prak It Up, Lay It In The Cut" and the basement production (it even sounds alive-compressed on CD), this would find no less an authority on simulation than Jon B. "The Funky" is a simple, soulful "Bea Make It Good To Me," the requisite "I can really spin" track on any funk album, will have you putting a dip in your lap and a glide in your stride. Social relevance? Check out the funk-witted protest song "We'll Be Hard." Originality? Since when has that ever counted? But it does leg the question where is this store flossing going to sound less vital, less transcendent than what's new? (Peter Shapiro)

## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

GUIDANCE GUIDANCE CD

Finally, a Finnish group free their countrymen from the burden of meteorological determination. Nuspirit Helsinki's singles, like their "Maksimika Breaks" 12", save the Finnish quint's bombarding stereotypes of Scandinavian quietude, turning instead to sunny Afro-Cuban big band sounds. Their self-titled debut album shows even more range, moving from bachata-infused broken beat ("Sein Per Chard") through cool jazz ("Mamanta Ray") to toasty club ("Hard Like A Rock"). Most surprising, though, are the numerous R&B tracks here. The quintet have apparently been lurking behind the speaker cabinets in D'Angelo's studio, judging from the compressed organ, muted horns and quadsome bass. One Karma shines as resident neo-soul diva, shown up by Nicole Willis's smouldering guest appearance on the opening "Honest", as she weaves it and out of cascading horn lines like a swallow in flight.

## PLAYGROUP DJ-KICKS

STUDIO M7 M7 12" CD

Jewer Jackson, head of the aggressively eclectic Output label, was the zeitgeist just right with the Playgroup project, a glossy tour through disco, electro and synth pop. Sticking to that mould, his DJ-Kicks mix is heavily indebted to the same sources, featuring tracks from Material, Nektar, Focus, KC Flight, even The Human League. And with plenty of other camps that have been quick to cash in on the "electrodash" phenomenon, there's no shortage

of contemporary artists working in a retro template. Hence The Baptism's emotive funk-punk, Porcelain Corporation's dirty electro and Ralph Rosario's savvy R&B-disco. But Jackson's mix also takes some unexpected detours through less predictable territory. KCube's broody remix of Aze Raga, Metro Area's post-disco bounce and Zongren's fantastically weird "Lunar Music" all prove that there's more to style than simply pose. An entertaining, occasionally exhilarating drive under the (anxiety of) influence.

## PREFUSE 73 THE 92 VS 02 COLLECTION

WARP WARP 150 CD

It's no wonder that Scott Hermen, an Atlanta now anchored in Barcelona, recently signed Ann Arbor's Dabrye to his own Eastern Developments label: the latter's best-kept best buzz is all over the opening "Dance Perverts Bitches," which is built on the sampled sounds of a witty pamphlet. The four tracks here are marginally more straightforward than the jittery compositions Hermon just edged on his debut LP. Vocal Studies + Upbeat Narratives — there's more straight-breasted, less choppy hip-hop, less vocal hypocrisy. It still sounds like Hermon has not some soul going through a sieve, with foreboding horn lines and cool keyboard chords rendered in a goaded wash, but the effect never feels gimmicky. Indeed, on "If Never Entered," this melancholy melodies far overshadow the technical detailing, while "Love You Bring" is the kind of lush, abandoned instrumental track that Fat Jon The Ample Soul Physician might turn out in one of his more perverse moments.

## SEUI LOOSE LIPS

DEATHWAVE DEATHWAVE 12"

Bug! In the Atlanta member Seui, aka Paul Delly, checks in with one of his strongest releases to date. UK Hip-hop has recently hit upon the idea of underpinning spiffy lyrical delivery with stuttering Garage beats. Done wrong, the idea sinks like a rock under the overburdened bombast of thigh-thumping crews like So Solid, who favour chartboard, streetwise bluster over innovation. But Seui drops the superficialism so much better, sticking to a sparse electro-suffler somewhere between K Culture and Isoler — the perfect vessel for MC Lync L, who keeps the dream afloat with bettered down rhythms and unrelenting flow. "If loose lips sink ships/M/ if sleepy lips sink ships/Like gymnastics and shafts it" "30cm", on the B-side, is a typically Bug!-out foray into fat, fuzzy chords and offbeat, post-Poetic funk.

## SOTE SUBCONSCIOUS

WARP WARP 150 12"

It's hard to believe that Ato Etichea, a genial San Francisco art student of Persian extraction, is behind these post-Hardcore assaults. "Electric Dear" is a nasty breakbeat track in the vein of Squapeasher's more straightforward

perimeters, but the whole thing sounds like it has been soaked in sweat till the very last note rattled through. The sound flutters between silence and total overdrive, creating an interference pattern that laps maliciously at the face of the song. It is actually nearly the same effect produced in my neighborhood coffee house, where an errant interior designer placed a ceiling fan directly beneath the in-house speaker — so that, ironically, every CD played in the chameleon sounds audaciously awed, gliding if you stand just right the right spot. "Subconscious" lays off the deflected drops, and while less disconcerting, the relentless breakbeat assault and classic nagg bassline are no less exhilarating.

## STIGG OF THE DUMP FEATURING SEBUTONES

### STILL ALIVE AT THE VEIL VOODOO

ENDANGER ENDANGER 10"

Named after a fetal chamber in the children's novel by Cive Ring, Helms producer Stigg Of The Dump and his cohorts in Sebubones, Sunao and Buck65, are clearly thumbing their nose at some backpacker's book roots already pioneered by dJUDGEED and numerous Antoon projects. They're also influenced by punk rock. "Fire Dollar Jesus" borrows the rhythmic and melodic signature from mid-80s hardcore, though slowed down and softened with fuzzy and bell tones. Buck65's four-square delivery feels awfully straight — perhaps another echo of punk's ambivalent portentiousness — and lanes like 'k's in his twilight/Sits in his house/None in the window/And States to Strauss' make you long for an instrumental version. Sunao's gleefully delivery on "Gallige Beer" flows much more naturally, as he gets his enjoyment on — but the similarity to Aesop Rock's despoiled dard is almost uncomfortably close. But "Short Strings", another Stigg and Sunao joint, is a strong column of splattercore beats and grim monologue, suggesting that there are a couple of cats in Helms' worth putting in your Kikofa.

## TETINE VS SOPHIE CALLE SAMBA DA MONALISA

SULPHUR MIELLOSA CD

In a diabolical display that fuses electronic sambas, delightfully engineered layers of sound and dialogue takes from Sophie Calle's moves Double Blind and No Sex Last Night, Tetine (Brazilian artists Bruno Werner and Elete Meridian) have created a dispassionate American revelation of great tenderness and aspires. As male and female voices offer intimate insights into the directionless, inertial flow of their relationship, a sharply defined soundtrack follows them on a road trip from New York to Vegas. The telegraphist tint, cool French tone and Hip-hop logic of the opening suggest an emotionally detached take on Jean-Luc Godard's classic about Au Bout De Souffle, but the more longing of "Amado Amado" and "I Met Him In A Bar Part Two" go way beyond even that. (Ken Hollings)

# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## BANDULLU JAQUARIUS/DUB MUSIC MAN MUSIC 17"

Always at their best when their techno tendencies splinter into shivie breaks, or when they revert back to the confident dub style which provides their base, Bandullu's new album *Redemption* is perhaps best bypassed by fans of versions for two simultaneously released 7" singles "Jaquarius" and "Detention" both come with incoherent duos which skank along at a rapid pace. The former is the pick of the two, even taking into account John D'Onofrio's lightweight, but heartfelt vocals.

## BIG YOUTH RIDE LIKE LIGHTNING: THE BEST OF BIG YOUTH 1972-1976 TROJAN TROJAN002 2XCD

For those worshippers who wandered over the purchase of Blood & Fire's megarelease *Hardy Universal Dread*, their samprastudio produced third CD overview of the mighty Youth, here's an alternative that's not too far away in quality and a lot less expensive. Dave Hensley has anthologized the DJ over two discs, the first covering productions from Lee Perry, Keith Hudson, Donk Harriott, Gussie Clarke, Glen Brown, Joe Gibbs, Phil Pratt and Sonia Pottinger from the early to mid 70s, while the second selects from Youth's later self-productions. Given that most of these tunes originated as 7" singles with versions on the flip, and the majority of these rhythms are stone classics, lovers of the dub will be disappointed to be only served with two mixes. Nevertheless, this set now becomes the new best place to start on an understanding of the cultural phenomenon that was Big Youth.

## THE BUG VS THE ROOTSMAN FEATURING MEXICAN WWW RAZOR X RZ002 7"

This new clash between Keen Martin's Bug project and Leeed's Rootsmen is reminiscent of those early Mark Stewart solo outings where the distortion was built into the act, leaving no room for manoeuvre on the replay. Like Martin's *Techno Animal*, the aim is to take hardcore beats to their extreme: the envelope is not only pushed but ripped up and thrown away. This is not even necessarily comparable to other European and American dub explorers like Pole, Rhythm & Sound or the clicks + cuts bangers, which despite their rough grails can remain, somehow, almost pristine. This is dirty music.

## DRY & HEAVY NEW CREATION/CREATIVE VERSION GREEN TAE GT000 12"

Though it features two new vocal tracks from the forthcoming album *From Creation*, the piece of vinyl is still required for their corresponding duos. Little Man's vocal sheen, as usual, on the title track, an uptempo rockers-style tune, "Right Track", with vocals from Big Al, feels like a stone classic even though it's an original. Despite the live vocal performances the duos are what

distinguish the 12" — fierce, raging mixes in the style of Emil Thompson's best work for Culture.

## HYDROPONICS FROM THE GROWING ROOM DUBHADD DUBHADD007 CDLP

The Hydropoetics' second album release finds Dougie Wadrop heading for more traditional territory with a vocal and dub showcase. Originally conceived strictly as a dub follow-up to their first outing, the rhythms were laid down at Conscious Sounds last summer. Inevitably being a busy time for the studio, passing singers and DJs got involved in the sessions, and several of the rhythms were voiced by JA legend Prince Alla and long time associates Singer Blue and Culture Freeman. Kesty Krotta, Sister Maria and Pablo Diamond added their contributions, and by the autumn a full set of vocal cuts had been recorded. The tracks were then stripped back and rebuilt by Jah Wadrop in trademark heavyweight style. Although the duos are preferable to these sets, it's encouraging to find young producers taking the time to cut vocal tracks instead of going for the easy shots.

## LOVE GROCER FRESH PRODUCE DUBHADD DUBHADD008 CDLP

Love Grocer is a collaboration centred around the songwriting duo of Chris Peter (trombone, keyboards and bass) and David Fulwood (trumpet and guitar) who, as the main players in The Crispy Horns brass section, have featured on releases from major artists in the arena — Mad Professor, Stereo MCs, Moniebus, Steel Pulse, ADF and House Army, to name but a few. Although it must be said to be asked to work with these well established artists, there's nothing like doing it for yourself. This is the follow-up to their excellent debut, the mostly instrumental *Roots' Widdn*, guided by the unique harmony sound of their brass ensemble playing. The time vocal favours are added by roots stalwart Earl 16 on the dramatic "No Turning Back", MP Space delivers a nice, lazy chat on the "Staling 17" variant "Salute To Sam", while Cheesie Cat revisits Love Grocer's best loved tune, "A Little Rain". The last outstanding quality in this set is the exemplary playing of Peter and Fulwood. Suffice to say that all the great Jamaican instrumental musicians of the 60s remained unheralded in their own time.

## THE MIGHTY QUARK SILVERDALE PLAY PLAY0002

Mark D'Sullivan, an Irishman based in Sweden, is the production brain of The Mighty Quark, whose output is now released via Japan's Play label. Appearing last in the label's *Stone*, *Scissors*, *Paper* series, The Mighty Quark stood out with dubbed up beats over gray underlays that belonged to neither Chicago nor Berlin. This set confirms the promise, especially with the introduction of folk singer Tom Somers, who remains determinedly his own man on top of the slow, chugging (although way too short) "Reasons To Love". Mostly judicious jazz tingles

wave in and out of the mix, but am I alone in thinking a trumpet must ought to remain an unwanted item unless in the hands of the supremely gifted?

## STEREOEYP MY SOUND G-STONE G-STONE0017 CD

Stereoeye, aka Stefan Mooré, spent five years in New York immersing himself in hip-hop and reggae before moving back to Austria to become the protégé of Danabie dubsters Kruder & Dorfmeister. The vocals of Tieman and Sugar B occupy this album's first four tracks which, in the style of the Viennese scene, are a lighter electro-dub than their northern counterparts in Berlin. There's an effortless infusion of two-step, dancehall and Garage influences in the mix, most successfully on the gorgeous "Fang Style", which stands as one of Tieman's finest vocal moments and must be issued as a single with version without delay. By the second half of the album, the Tech-soul tendency has taken over completely, with vocals from Cesar, Greenwood and Collee Royce. For all its accomplishment, only the last half of this album can be recommended as a dub thing.

## SYSTEMWIDE PURE AND APPLIED BSI BSI0027 CD

Part of the same new wave of electric dubbers as Dry & Heavy, Rhythms & Sound and many of the new Viennese outfits, *Systemwide* provides the sonic framework rather than a restraining reference. *Systemwide* conducted last year with Scientist at the controls for their set at Saatchi's Experience Music Project. That gg obviously find them up as this new collection finds the group in a somewhat muted, avoiding the tendency of some agit-act duos to be a little too preening for their own good. By the second track here, the fluid guitar and slightly phased vocals are coming on like Zappa in Waterhouse... now that would have been a treat. Guesting are Dr Israel from Brooklyn on "Chris Time" and Oakland's DJ Collage, who recently assisted the Sola Surfers on their new material. This is a much finer record than their previous work — their diverse influences are now well absorbed.

## LINVAL THOMPSON PHOENIX DUB MOTION PICTURE011 CDLP

Mohen have now established a niche in the UK, alongside Blood & Fire and Pressure Sounds, as being the best and classiest reggae reissue specialists. On top of that, Motion is developing the knack of seeking out some lesser known and unissued gems — commercially risky but creatively well on the money. This newest release is no exception: mixes by reggae's holy trinity of dubmasters Tubby, Jahmya and Scientist on a bunch of tunes produced by vocalist Linval Thompson in the late 70s, using The Revolutionaries and Roots Radics. The sound has moved out of the rockers and steppers era into a heavier pre-dancehall, mostly bassless territory, but with plenty of invention on the mix before it

all became too formulaic. The voices of Prince Alla, Johnny Dabourne, Barry Brown and other roots guests who cut on the releases, just like they should. The killer track is the opener, a spookily mix of John Holt's "The Clock".

## VARIOUS IMPACT PRESENTS "JAVA": THE REMIXES IMPACT IBA01103 12"

"Java" was the record that launched Augustus Pablo's career in the early 70s, and it's the kind of rhythm that can never generate too many versions. Out of New York, this Olive Chin vinyl pressing contains Nkai Mmamah's reverential take on the rhythm which first appeared on a Select Dubs Blood & Fire remix collection "Java Passion", which has also appeared before, as a strict percussion and melodic reading from Pablo himself plus Bong Hermin. But it's the Winston Wright byproduct cut which makes this release most memorable, excepting another keyboard driven reggae Rara Groove with a great big fat fading climax dominating a punnier than usual mix. Buyers beware: not many of these expensive items are around in the UK.

## VARIOUS STUDIO ONE DJS SOUL JAZZ S0014 12"

The probable reason for Studio One's lack of renown for its work with Dis is that it was so strong in every other department. Undeterred, Soul Jazz continues its excellent series featuring different facets of the label with the new edition of the collection, even for dehard fans of the DJ set. The opening shot from MC Monty Machuku, a tribute to Studio One boss Clement Dodd, entitled "Monty Scorchs", sets the pace for this US track set where the likes of Dennis Alcapone, Dillinger, Ray J, Jacobs and Big Joe scold, chant, toast and rhyme on a series of heart-lunging, smothering and garbishing classic rhythms. In addition, it's great to hear from some lesser known DJs, such as Prince Francis, Jah Scortize, Jah Buzz and Jah Jesso. The CD comes with bonus clips of a forthcoming film about Studio One, made with Dodd's full co-operation.

## ZION TRAIN ORIGINAL SOUNDS OF THE ZION UNIVERSAL EGG W0006 CDLP

Zion Train are something of a dub institution these days, having introduced many new fans to the genre through their tireless touring and support of new artists and labels. It's good to report that for the core of this album, their first in three years, they are largely back to their deep dubbing roots. From from Manchester's Nucleus Roots emerges the opening track, which features, lovely down brass lines from those Chicago Horns, aka Love Grocer. Other guests include regular Moates, London based Live Roots and the vocalist from Kava Kava, Pat Fugione. Those pulled into the Zion Train experience by their first-paced live sets should be satisfied by a balance of last techno fusion tunes of the kind that broke the resistance of sluggish dancers worldwide. □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## CHRIS CARTER ELECTRONIC AMBIENT REMIXES THREE CONSPIRACY INTERNATIONAL CITEARS CD

Chris Carter's return visit to material he recorded in the 1970s finds him reconfiguring into warm lazy coils of dreamy reverberation some of the harsh rhythmic beats and dark pulses he laid down as part of Throbbing Gristle. The results may be easier on the ear than their acoustic originals, but it's hard not to feel that more has been taken away than added here. The TG mission was always greater than some of its parts, and Carter's reworkings lack the wayward edge supplied by his Gristle co-conspirators. The track titles may have been transformed into gently moaning ghosts of themselves, but somehow "indisciplined", "Heather Mirth" and "Generic Terrorists" don't have the same kick anymore.

## ELECTRIC BIRDS GRADATIONS MILLE PLATINUM MP112 CD

There's a quiet insistence to Mike Marinier's latest release that gently propels the listener forward. Swirling fragments meet and collide with a purpose, clearly outlined sonic fragments get sensually attached to each other, then move on. From the busy clicking gears evoked on "Cyclist" to the impatient thrills contributing to the sonic injections of "Slow Motion", bodies are simultaneously in constant movement and at complete rest. Like the rhythms on "Astral Traveling" that are phased in backwards against intricate displays of spidery electric bass, each track builds a pendulous momentum for itself from such brief moments of suspension.

## IQUINN SEED TRIUMPH & MCD

The latest offering from Trium comes with this excellent Colgate label combining its worldwide search for new takes on minimalist techno. This CD is the turn of Irish composer and producer Stephen Quinn to create some tender dimensions with his blend of delicately floating beats and sweetly protracted tones. Delicacy and balance rule the extended durations and supercharges of longer tracks "Fall" and "Brief Moment", shorter excursions such as "Grace" and "Bent" have a charm all their own. This enhanced CD also comes with another short piece of graceful animation by video artist Yvette Klein.

## THE TIGRE REMIXES CHICKS ON SPEED CD/CDR CD

Dedicated to the notion that a zealous without glamour is nothing more than a serious overstatement of public virtues, The Tigre's ideological underground rollercoaster offers more flash and sparkle than a supercharged glitterball. Consequently the thrills, spills and tumbles come pretty thick and fast on this sex track remix EP. Most fabulously, Rip Speed's Aphro-Dilem mix of "Dyke March 2001"

alternates sampled voices speaking out in the name of "hated ladies" and "foremost lady", while the blaspheinous clavichord riffs on Tim Goldsworthy and James Murphy's DFA remix of "Decompost" and the electro-punk defiance of Swim With The Dolphins' remix of "On Guard" are definitely worth getting on your knees for.

## MARUMARI THE REMIXES CARIPARK CRRPK14 CD

The peaceful, golden-eyed inhabitants of Alopeke are calling once again, their delicate alien codes being reinterpreted this time by some of Marumari's best friends, including Caspark. I celebrate Greg Davis and Casano Vs Japan. As a mark of identification with the planet's etheric aspect of floating strangeness, each track simply bears the name of its remix. One thing seems to unite these artists: they shared with to amplify Marumari's offbeat sound without losing any of its sweet melancholy. Unlike adult colourists bent to good effect, to Rocco Ratti Robert Lippok strips his contribution down to understated Techno-pop keyboards, under "Dee" goes for an old West Coast analogue approach reminiscent of Mort Canale. Meanwhile, Marumari is elsewhere busy completing his first sci-fi novel.

## JEFF MILLS ACTUAL ARIS ARIS CD

"Exploring the distances between now and then," the latest in the series of sublime abstractions offers eight entitled tracks that glitter with intense inner life of their own. Jeff Mills has the gift of making the most extended time clusters and spinning spirals of notes carry the listener forward as convincingly as any programmed beat ever could. If successful, each successive track offers further proof that the past can never survive what we remember of it.

## BARBARA MORGENSTERN & ROBERT LIPOK HERBST/SOMMER/FRÜHLING/ WINTER COMINO SERIES 500 SERIES 112"

Harmony and rhythm come gently together on this intriguing collaboration between Berlin-based electro-soundscaper Morgenstern and To Rocco Ratti Lippok. The seasons of the year are presented charmingly out of sequence over the course of a four track EP each establishing its own aural mood and sonic narrative. "Autumn" cracks, drips and fragments over gentle chord progressions. A fast bass synth meanders with lazy keyboards and a crooning, wistful female chorus on "Summer", before "Spring" gathers itself over acoustic guitars and delicately insinuated, echoing percussion. "Winter", the longest of the four compositions, is all tender aches, blurred traces and haunted distance, sounding a little like Twitter in

perverse mood. Expect a full-length release from these two some time in the near future.

## OPTIC NERVE OPTICAL DELSEN 30080871 CD

A Motor City original, and therefore, more comfortable coexisting under any number of names other than his own, Keith Tucker was co-founder of legendary Detroit heavy hitters Axis BB, before strutting out in search of a lighter, more intimate and soulful take on techno as Allen FM, K1-19941, K-1 and Optic Nerve. A blend of new and unreleased tracks, together with the occasional reworked classic such as "Promontion" and "Shades Of Grey", the material contained here has both subtlety and drive. Especially strong are the sparse waveform cutting through "Vertigo (Live Show Mix)", the wistful stringing of "Virtual World" and the mournful, muted pulsations on "Destination Detroit" that make a sweet, obsessive groove out of all our notions of progress.

## PLANETARIUM MUSIC TRADITIONAL PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC (PLANET 2) STRANGE ATTRACTORS AUDIO HOUSE SAH4008 CD

Bearing a title that would not disgrace a Smithersian folklings release, the second part of Alex Bandy's Planetarium Music series is a sharp and sensible reevaluation of 70s Krautrock at its most limply comic. Following the dry portentous buffeting of "Introduction", the bold minimalist scintillations of "Jemima" and the grand drifting swells of "Another World" recall more innocent times when Tangerine Dream were Salvador Dali's house band, and Klaus Schulze was hired to record the soundtrack for a glossy, high-fired porn film. Beautifully executed, each successive track offers further proof that the past can never survive what we remember of it.

## RANDOM LOGIC NUMREBS TECHNIKA TEH002 CD TEMPONAUTA 155.521.981.589.103 TECHNIKA TEH003 CD

The first release from this Slovenian Techno label was *Technika*, a compilation representing the state of "elektronska slovenska". Brought together under the cultural auspices of NSI, it represented a range of artists working in the seemingly universal domain of deep and minimal electronics, redefined scientific imagery and lean conceptual thinking. Featured artists Random Logic has, in fact, already missed *Technika* under a variety of names for such international acts as Communique, Black Label, Kial, Planet Rhythmic and Tesco, while also collaborating with Umeck and Larbach on several projects back home. Random Logic's Gagar Zempic and Miha Nemec favour grand rhythmic sweeps, resonant data loops and clear keyboard thrusts.

Follow *Technika*'s contributors Temponauts prefer the kind of pared-down frameworks and

reined disco bounce favoured on the more dance-orientated sectors of the Colagra Techno scene. Written and produced by Slovenian DJs Damjan Borj and Mrgan Omrlec, Temponauts's debut CD shares Random Logic's projected sense of impassive discipline but with a surer feel for the dancefloor.

## KEVIN SAUNDERSON KS01 TRUSTTHECD.COM TTIC00103 CD

Coming in like a lion with an awesome shapeshifting roar engineered by Saunderson himself, this driving DJ mix from the legendary Detroit techno producer is as much a homage to the past as a testament of his continued belief in the crucial importance of heart and soul to musical practice. While a personal note from Saunderson pays heartfelt tribute to some of the great names who have helped shaped techno over the years, from kindly remembered De La Soul and Rion to the more contemporary Derrick May and Juan Atkins, the session itself is a headlining leap into rhythmic Afro-futurism. John Thomas's "African Power" establishes an upfront mood that is powered along by cuts from the likes of E-Dancer, Funk D'Void, Gary Martin and Mr. Shift, each one tweaked, sheared and equalized to relentless perfection.

## SPEEDY J LOUDBOXER NONMATEU NOMUGO CD

Rotterdam's Jocham Paap gets back to basics after the concussive flare and exodus of his previous Nonmateu CD, A Shocking Hubb. Spread over the first six tracks is a vast slab of low level industrial funk, beginning with the clipped fundamental sgraw of "Heener", which is then broken down repeatedly to reveal lower and lower depths. After a first tantalizing reassertment of the theme on "Bitter", the next evoked blurring of voices and effects of "Niek" gives way to the second main assault of "Niek", "Seinek" and "Bugmond" - tightly packed, high speed bursts of industrial Techno that lead into the searing deacceleration and collective insanity of "Kric Live". After that, things get cruder still, leaving the slowly gathering rhythmic stamp of closing track "Patrick Rins" sounding quite restrained by contrast.

## SUTEKH FELL ORTHODOX MUSIC ORTHO CD

The gift and minutiae of daily social living are stained and filtered through the edge sensibility of Seth Horvitz, producing a series of finely detailed sketch sketches that reveal a world drifting slowly out of focus. Repeat minutes stain into a corporate board meeting are out into a harsh reminder of noise and dance beats on "Recession Clouds". A toy horoscope is slowed down then souped over with metallic percussion on "Slow Toy Medley". "Phasy" is a Fender Rhodes left floating in a makeshift cocktail lounge universe of mugged field recordings and harsh, degrading effects. As with real life, there's a hidden track at the end. □

# HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

## BOOM BIP & DOSEONE CIRCLES

**Like a hot chick**  
The rather remarkable record from the Arabian thongs came out a couple of years ago on the American Music label, but has just been released over here. Part reggae fusion session, part open mic night at the original Cabaret Voltaire, part madman mumbling on a street corner, this might be the best, and certainly most challenging, document to have emerged from HipHop's avant-garde. With Dose's loquacious, his constantly shifting perspective from his mic persona to his 'real' incarnation as Adam Drucker and his obsession with religion ("I found God, then lost him again in the gathering crowd"), this is HipHop from the lunatic fringe. Boom Bip constructs the perfect gestalt for Dose's ahnks rap: the callouses whining around a schizophrenic's mind, climes twirling like marbles above a baby's crib, little marimbos and Sennheiser drums. (Peter Shapiro)

## COSMIC FORCE/CLYDE ALEXANDER & SANCTION CHOCOLATE STARSHIP/GOT TO GET YOUR LOVE

**YEMME PRODUCTIONS VP001 12"**  
This is the other Peter Brown (even though he still wants you to get funky with him), known for his disco collaborations with Patrick Adams on P&P Productions and for arranging cut HipHop like Willie Work and Margot's Coolcut Crew for Sound Of New York. "Got To Get Your Love" is classic underground disco of which Wood, Brass & Steel and Peche Castello would be proud. With this sly 'n' he didn't edit, Kenny Dope catches the guitar and keyboard making hips at each other while corgis and clogs digg on them. Clyde glides on his horns, slipping about her tushies and putting on the retardations in your pants. Twenty-two years ago, and one Detroit radio star, Cosmic Force puts another keyhole sale on the fire (hands still attached) with some "I've been a medium disco," its driving and soulful rather than crotch itch for bullshit magazine parties and raves. "Chocolate Starfish" is a franchise name; just give Cosmic Force back to "Zulu Nation Throwdown".

## GENUINE ELECTRIC LATIN LOVE MACHINE INTRODUCING THE NEAT BEAT COMPULSIVE COMING A CD&P

Everyone's smiling at DJ Jester The Flipflo. First folks by, especially on last year's *Real Walk* Rites mix CD, when the San Antonio DJ leaps the Greatest Guitar Stars over from Seabroth's "The Waves" (saved by Smitty [formerly of The Roots] and Quest Red [Mechanical Wailing Robot]). GELM is a collection that makes "We're it's" fingers out of rock-brace fans. Jester's talking Bionik record wins, recalling the words of Shook G. "We records kept flooding and the fish kept laughing." The title track slides into the Roterball soundtrack's "Exclusive Lounge Party" (not the wack L'ESPION 2 version) before gets (greens start zapping L'Espion). On "Dates" Jester presses Fudrucker hamburgers with burgled

Pavement lines about expiring dates. Set to a drifting pop-punk beat, "Eager" is a lovely plea from Simploton. "Many artists use me to make their records sound important and cutting edge. It sucks to be me." Elsewhere Jim Rockford gets postmodern and Christian kids play chadefies. Songs begin one way and end up in a loopy record pile up. Like Jester says, "What is murder?" On "Me + You = Zero", he sings from the bottom of a fifth of cheap vodka before diving our drone-fuzzed faces into the haystack that dreaded sundown — replacing the styhus with Jonah Me's spur.

## GZA

### FAME WHITE LABEL 12"

Surely the only rap song to mention both stars of Just You And Me, Kid: Brooke shields bullets and George burns a blunt William's holder. Like he did with "Labels", GZA uses proper nouns to drop, the line that a crime says traced through shows ("Dance to the crime", "I'm a brooklynite" and "the cleaners" (Elizabeth's father). That smart, "Jason's old took his first steps in Army's waller" (Jo's best messages from Satchel's page) but "the butter on Esther's Ale" isn't going to save Thelma's cooking, much less this filler beat. The piano is Dudley Moore and the G-funk whine is duckier than John Cryer.

## KING SHAMEEK FEAT EL DA SENSEI, PACEWON, EL GANT, STRATA-GEE AND OMEGA DRS/CITY WISE LANDSCAPE KUR905 12"

While The Showboys deserve a piece of toast for their part in New Orleans Bounce History, it's King Shameek who debated the fuzzy cynic rids that new makes people rap to sell. Besides that 89 12 by Jazzy J and Seville, New Jersey's Shameek also produced Twin Hyde and same Hip-House which less deny ever happening. D. "City Wise", Shameek beats the "Freddie's Dead" horse but sells it to the chop shop for a new sound. "DRS" opens with capping Astrod drums and piano which should have stuck around to hear Pacowen steal an aibag from a truck. But once the strings drop, aibag becomes his sleeping bag and El Da Sensei acknowledges his kicking fellow, always eager to carry his spray can. The El Gant song, "You probably rock a spike with a mallet", is actually a compliment for today's chit Hip-House revival. But Shameek used to rock his wall and it's good to know there are still people out there who would share his name in their skull.

## MR LIF

### HOME OF THE BRAVE/THE UNORTHODOX

**DEFINITIVE JAY DUKO 12"**  
From Boston comes Mr. Lif, fresh off his live from Afghanistan EP *While "Home Of The Brave"* may get him disesteemed by airport security, the buzzer survey says his Def Jay EP is his best yet. According to Lil, you can save electricity by switching off the brasswax machine and not watching CNN, but the jagged synth chunk says

get outside and shake a limb. Just keep close to the bomb cellar. Sounding kind of like Dunder Ice Dog with a cold, Lif warns about "Operation Let's Get Ten" and getral phobias. From his next Shrivets day, he should fly in Bobby Corbin's "Passover" voice, squeaking "I'm a bush! I'm a bush!" On "The (short)bed", Lif drinks beer and eats potatoes.

## SACH SUCKAS HATE ME MARY JOY MIX07 COLP

Although the surviving member of The Nonce said he heard vocales in Doug E Fresh's "Nuthin", Sach isn't as spastic as his LA peers, making it "simple as pi though pi is infinite". His Seven Days To Engineer tape caused a local dub-bust, and Suckas Hate Me is another gleaming saunter through Control Avenue cries On "I Live On", he places kalimba and makes a desert need glitters. "Every time I think how it could be my high gets broken in bits," the trumpet player says on "Illustrations", inspired by the some from Mushi Groove when Run Rings a wad of cash at the meter because that dude from LA Law just made off with Sheila E. On "Ceasing: A Phenomenon And A Mic" is a true love beats as tapes drop into mouths "like grapes" and tone arms spin record diamonds. The Just-Live/Mentality duumail watch is pleased to announce another sighting, and Meekus still gets to the snake-tip quivers, "waiting for a piece of half-ass MC like you".

## SUGAR RAY DINKE CABRINI GREEN RAP HAW RECORDS PROMO 12"

As for rap in early 80s, Chicago had little beyond Caesar's Greysoy Urban Show and Ice-Bace's Super Bowl rap. Behind Sugar Ray... Dink? The guy must have few if he's rolling through the national Cabrini Green projects parking radar but a name that won't leave home without Rakky. But Sugar Ray is no kid glove; mashing your nose with Melish beats; the smells of a busted elevator while its passengers wait to be taken somewhere. The DMX drums have legs and gut, allowing Dink to hop stairs even at a time, not letting the cheery (but not inassurmountable) guitar stick to his shoes. The hook warns, "You might get hit with an egg or a jar". Dink! Dink! also recalls the demise of Larry from Electric Force Band, making you wonder if Electric Force Band put out any records.

## THE TERMINATORS POLO BEATS/FOREVER DIS SHOW&RECORDED 12"

Snowflake Records was the most scenic rap label in B&W with knock art lifted from a Matherborn postcard. "Polo Beats" has the might of "Marley Scar", opening with a hi-hat and live semant horns courtesy of D. Polo. Marley dingles up Crater Lake Marley drums walks the bass and some guy named MC Frosty walks down to a pier, "trying to find the big idea" when a voice from the water, maybe on ego echo, says he's the people's choice. Like Patrick Savage at Lake Lure, Frosty then meets a girl

who's "fly to the y" and has the time of his life as she makes him do a "hugid dance". Not to be confused with Life MC Frosty, this frosty walks out Run-DMC at the mall on "Forever DC". While Run couldn't riped Frosty a new spirale hole, there's a great wave where Run DMC and D Daps jay and zack! Turns out MC Shan wrote it, pouring a beetsful of Queensland on the dock.

## TWEET OOOPS (OH MY) ELEKTRA 67200 12"

Don't think Boobie Brown was expecting this when he sat on the toilet seat with the cocoa butter on Pharcyde's "On The DL". Tweet updates The Divin's, singing about a sun which right now is pretty low on the Catholic list of priorities. She comes home from the party alone, thinking, "I was looking so good / I couldn't reject myself" and oops then get her clothes. On the flip, Fabulous and Bubba Sparox are all for it (big shout) who cares? It's all about Timbaland's Tweet beat making and there's an instrumental for the beautiful. Tim gets his back on with what sounds like a woodpecker knocking out new lyrics to squashed EMI blunts and the nasy fwing of an upright bass.

## UPTOWN DOPE ON PLASTIC/IT'S MY TURN TOMMY BOY PROMO 12"

Only 88, a year that looks like two headless snappers, could produce "Hypeapale" and "Subterranean" versions. Uptown sounds like he showed up at Tommy Boy and carved rhymes all over the conference room table with a library pencil before demanding defies. Though the faded 123 deserved an album, it didn't happen. You almost winces as Uptown tells the Tommy Boy staff to gather mud, but at that point were ducking under the table from the drum barrage arranged by Paul C. partner CJ Moore and Darius Ross. At least an Uptown lyric inspired one of the best DJ Shadow and Blackalicious collaborations, "Count & Estimate". Produced by Stereotonic drummer Bobby Simmons, "It's My Turn" takes a leg from War's "Slipping Into Darkness". By now the table is a heap of shavings as the sloppy guy threatens, "If you speak some word of the spoken you'll be provok'd" some bones to be broken.

## VARIOUS MONTROUS: THAT'S MY BEATS! SOUL MUSIC BIRD CD&P

Kurtis Mantronix's contribution to the early 80s nostalgia boom won't readily shatter any preconceptions or shock and surprise anyone, but it is a lovely reminder of early HipHop's polymorphic perversity and a lovely nod to all those dreamy love-things who insist the 80s were better than the 80s and then can only produce Radiohead as evidence. If you're looking to replicate New York's Kiss FM circa 1983, you won't do a better job than this, which skews Machine's "The Computer Games" and Funky 4 Plus 1's "That's The Joint". (Peter Shapiro) □

# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Bill Shoemaker

## NILS HENRIK ASHEIM 16 PIECES FOR ORGAN SCM 507 CD

Unlike Fred Van Horn, whose talent as an improvising pianist was established long before he transposed his sensitivity to the pipe organ, Norwegian composer Nils Henrik Asheim set aside his classical background and approached the behemoth simply as a sound-producing device. The results are frequently stunning on 16 Pieces For Organ. Asheim demonstrates an intimate knowledge of organ keyboard technique and the instrument's unique air-pushing mechanics in these improvisations. More often than not, however, his main building blocks are textures instead of motives or figures. Still, his pieces always have a center of gravity that bekes a deep background in composition.

## TRAVIS BAKER & SARA SCHOENBECK PEACE BEYOND CONFLICT SPC 261 CD

Peace One is a vivid snapshot of emergent Left Coast music, taken after Vancouver-based Travis Baker and LA-based Sara Schoenbeck took part in Vancouver's Company Style Time Rites festival in 2001. The duo move surely between open improvised space and notated materials as varied as plump-toned vowels and treacherous unisons. Baker and Schoenbeck easily exchange lead and support roles, while slipping effortlessly into the grey areas in between. Both have a respect for the low end power of their respective instruments, and use it judiciously. Their facility transforms the unlikely proposition of a bass-tenor programme into an engaging reality.

## BILLY BANG VIETNAM: THE AFTERMATH JUSTIN TIME JUTTB01 CD

Vietnam combat veteran Billy Bang brought home a lifetime supply of demons. Nothing—alcohol, drugs, his ascendancy as one of jazz's great violinists—could shake them off. Vietnam: The Aftermath is an "everything on the line" confrontation to reclaim his life. It is the soundtrack of catharsis deferred. However, it is not an album longed primal scream. Apart from the pervasive Asian haze of the thematic materials, there is little on the surface that separates it from his other albums. Still, the crispy written selection of blues, ballads and blowing vehicles asserts a quietly harrowing power track by track. Although the shared passion of Bang's ensemble, largely composed of fellow veterans (including saxophonist Frank Leno, trumpeter Ted Daniel and drummer Michael Carvin), is palpable, Bang's intensity is ultimately overshadowing. Vietnam: The Aftermath is truly music as veritas as your life.

## BILL BARRON A SWEDISH-AMERICAN VENTURE DRAGON DR043 CD

In the late 50s and early 60s, tenor saxophonist/composer Bill Barron consolidated advanced jazz harmonic logic with an eye on the

emergent New Thing. Despite impressive work on Cecil Taylor's 1959 *Love For Sale*, and his two major classics *61 Sway* dates (recently reissued together as *Modern Winds Surto*), the untimely jazz economy of the 60s forced him to attempt expatriate life in Europe. Barron went home to the US in 1966, but frequently returned to Sweden, the birthplace of his wife, up until his death in 1989. A Swedish-American Venture is an excellent sampler of his collaborations with Swedish musicians spanning the years 1966-84. Except for one tantalizing, cutting-edge 1966 track with the 11-piece Swedish Radio Jazz Group, the album is comprised of nine quartet tracks confirming Barron's rare ability to give complex ideas an earthy bluesy feel. Hopefully, more of Barron's Swedish recordings will be forthcoming.

## BURTON GREENE WITH MARK DRESSER PEACE BEYOND CONFLICT SCM 261 CD

Though Burton Greene is reflexively associated with 50s NYC free jazz as his ESP disc, the Chicago-based pianist's sensibility was formed in the 50s, making him as just as susceptible to the lure of Monk as to the challenges of stretching structures and materials. *Peace Beyond Conflict* details Greene's pluralist aesthetic, with heart-pounding ballads, passages of lyrical grace and a hard-boiled reading of "Shuffle Bo!" nestled among the edgier pieces he co-composed with bassist Mark Dresser. Dresser's passionate attack and his pinpoint precision in deploying startling timbres and polyphonic arc statements make him an excellent foil for Greene, whose clean articulation of complex ideas remains his calling card.

## NOAH HOWARD AT DOCUMENTA IX BOCHOLDER SX00039 CD

While this 1992 cassette recording exemplifies the directness of saxophonist Noah Howard's music, it is the presence of pianist Michael J. Smith and bassist Jack Gregg, two 70s stalwarts who have kept very low profiles in recent decades, that makes *At Documenta IX* particularly noteworthy. Gregg's sturdy underpinning and Smith's large, sustain-saturated chords and dramatic sweeps of the keyboard are well suited to both the sanctified and stormy aspects of Howard's vocabulary. Fuelled by Hans Henderson's high octave drumming, the largely linear Howard (who plays tenor as well as alto) and the often rhapsodic Smith prove to be fine complementary collaborators. More importantly, the two are compatible collaborators, co-writing five of the album's nine pieces, spanning the ebullient "Joy" and the fierce "Mass".

## JOHN LINDBERG TWO BY FIVE BETWEEN THE LINES ST019 CD

Despite a real role in galvanising present-day chamber jazz through the *Strong Trio Of New York* and his watershed *Trilogy Of Works For Eleven Instrumentalists*, bassist/composer John

Lindberg has been inoperably stymied in realising laudable projects. Consisting of two string quartet pieces, beginning with his trademark more-than-lives, *Two By Five* fills a gaping hole in his discography. His cohorts—violinists Gabriel Brokoff and Rebecca Ansel, viola player Wendy Richmond and cellist Mikael Brokoff—share his technical standards and his penchant for a zealous attack. Lindberg also has plenty of solo space, in which he runs the gamut from bow-shredding arpeggio passages to gutbucket blues lines. *Two By Five* is as excellent as it is overdue.

## FRANÇOIS RAULIN TRIO TROIS PLANS SUR LA COMETE HARLOTY 583 CD

France teems with musicians like pianist François Raulin, bassist Bruno Chevillon and saxophonist François Cométois, whose music is stiffed by technical perfection. *Trois Plans Sur La Comète* is dotted with passages where the precision of piano improvisation, solo textures and saxophone multiphonics is confounding, not to mention that the articulation of the ensembles occasionally seem like they've been calibrated by machines. It doesn't take long, however, to realise the necessity for such exactness, as Raulin's compositions are so rigorously paced and edged that one false move would result in total desolation. Yet the intriguing ideas underlying this demanding music are often left unable to fully breathe.

## JAY ROSEN N' BUGLES DROUMS N' BUGLES SCM 355 CD

One of the great aspects of a label that releases dozens of titles a year is the de facto creation of what used to be called tastes—pools of artists working in various combinations. One of the more promising of CMR's profile output is drummer Jay Rosen. *Droums N' Bugles* is his 28th session for the label. Teaming up with trumpeters Herb Robertson and Paul Smoker in an improvised set, he maintains the delicate balance of providing a coherent rhythmic flow, while prodding his cohorts at every turn. Robertson and Smoker confirm their status as two of the music's most inventive trumpeters, allowing Rosen to shine brightly as well.

## NED ROTHENBERG INTERVALS: SOLO WORK FOR WOODWINDS, 2001 ANNEAL AN011 2XCD

Ned Rothenberg's collection of solo music for shakuhachi, clarinet, bass clarinet and alto saxophone feels like a clip from an ongoing, open-ended process, instead of a collection of finished pieces. He wisely casts materials into some controlled motion, rather than constant restlessness for their explosion. The tracks are peppered with asides and excursions that enrich Rothenberg's main storylines, and his measured uses of circular breathing and multiphonics are sensibly applied. In all, *Intervals* is an impressive statement by a fully retired multi-instrumentalist whose stock is strangely undervalued.

## MATTHEW SHIPP SONGS REPLASCH 340 2 CD

Songs appears just as penitent Matthew Shipp's hymnbook with critics to end "the plays what he plays because it's the only way he can play" is the gist of the emergent reactionary line, a position this solo collection of jazz standards (plus a hymn and a Christmas carol) will undoubtedly embody. Yes, Shipp underlines the heads of a few of these choruses like a kid with just a few years of lessons under his or her belt, and his left hand often has the subtlety of a crowbar. Yet his agenda is not Hank Jones's, nor even Paul Riley's. Shipp's treatment of these materials doesn't necessarily signify an allegiance or indifference to them. They are useful to him because their cultural baggage intensifies the juxtapositions that are part and parcel of his work. The album is perhaps best measured by the speaks through him tunes as varied as "De Good Dolphin Street" and "We Free King" (Shipp uses the latter to pivot on the traditional style, but not King's little modal tale on the turn) going against the pianist's blunt clusters, brooding octaves and incessant single-note figures: they sing.

## TRIO 3 OPEN IDEAS PALMETTO TRO302 CD

On the surface, Trio 3 looks like a shrewd response to market conditions, a benevolent truce of free music and left jazz notables. Yet drummer Andrew Cyrille, alto saxophonist Oliver Lake and bassist Reggie Workman create music that is probing as well as palatable. For ecstatic jazz acolytes, Open Ideas may feel tepid at best; but the lack of cathartic trapings should not be construed as an absence of heat. The blend of voice-like arbs, digging bass and crackling drums is a low-key intensity, whether they are freely improvising or listening to tunes built upon long, angular lines. After all, the coals are hottest after the flames subside.

## PER HENRIK WALLIN PROKLAMATION: A FAREWELL TO SWEDEN HARLOTY 583 2XCD

One of the most creative extrapolators of the Monk legacy, pianist Wallin knows all the sleights of hand to supplant sparse chords and make wrong sound right. He has a tightly coiled sense of line and a propensity to accelerate in ways that recall early 60s Cecil Taylor. Ironically, every aspect of his approach, particularly his sensitive touch, has been enhanced by his inability to pedal (after an accident confined him to a wheelchair). "Proclamation For H" is a freewheeling exchange with drummer Sam Alito Johansson, whose various styles are hailed out like photo albums, lighting lively barter and warm memories. De Bonus CD, recorded at the Blechna with bassist Peter Jensen and drummer Leif Wernström, he combs through pungent originals and minor classics like Freddie Redd's "Travel To Sweden" and Sonny Clark's "Woodoo." □



# Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

## ADAMS/COX/FINK/FOX DARK WIND GOLD BLUE MUSIC GB0005 CD

The Cole Ave Music label documents music from America's West Coast, and this new release is a representative selection of its output, with pieces from John Luther Adams and colleagues Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink and Jim Fox. Luther Adams's *Dark Wind* for flautist, minirimba, vibraphone and piano gets things off to a promising start, developing a slowly unfolding melodic line with tremendous resourcefulness. But after that things rapidly go downhill. Fink's *Thread Of Summer* is a throwback to a strangely English-sounding rural style, and leaves few clichés unexploited. Much the same can be said for Cox's *When April May and Fox* borrowings from Shaker songs by the other John Adams for his *Between The Wheels* are too overt for comfort. An affable enough disc: in small doses, but somehow it's rather run of the mill.

## FRANÇOIS DHOMONT CYCLE DU SON EMPREINTES DIGITALES MED1018 CD

Canadian electroacoustic composer François Dhomont offers a 50-minute cycle of pieces paying tribute to musical acoustics pioneer Pierre Schaeffer. Describing the opening piece as a "funeral march," Dhomont shapes a paraphrase out of material from the latter's *Étude Aux Objets*. Andreasen draws a trajectory between Schaeffer and those composers he has influenced, including Xenakis, Stockhausen, Béro and Luc Ferrari. The third piece suggests a connection between Schaeffer and the 14th-century French composer Guillaume De Machaut. This being a cycle, the final section, *Phonologie*, draws all the various strands together. Dhomont's piece is superbly crafted and does everything an electroacoustic composition should, but is that really enough?

## VIOLETTA DINESCU/ KARMELLA TSPKOLENKO PIANO MUSIC SARGASSO SB0040 CD

## MICHAEL EDWARDS & MARCO TREVISANI APAGON SARGASSO SB0041 CD

These two CDs from the adventurous Sargasso label offer new perspectives on the piano. Violetta Dinescu and Karmella Tspkolenko come from Romania and the Ukraine respectively and became friends when they met in Germany in the early 90s. Dinescu's pieces draw between atypical modernistic gestures and Chopin-style passagework, whereas Tspkolenko's work leans by leaning fluidly away from the familiar through a series of bizarre, despatch gestures. *Apagone* is a collaboration between Michael Edwards and Marco Trevisani that treats the sound of a prepared piano and conga drums with the computer processing, the notes claim that the music isn't "classical, nor computer music, jazz, electronics, Cuban, World... *Apagone* is all of these things and more." While the music might draw on all the above, it isn't more than

these traditions, rather a light and lively piece that's enormous fun to listen to.

## RICHARD EMSLEY FLOWFORMS METIER MW00044 CD

The pianist Joe Price describes Richard Emsley's music as "transcendental rather than escapist", before issuing a polemical directive against the prevailing mainstream tendency in British music that finds the composer's ilk so difficult to stomach. Emsley himself has taken a decidedly anti-carerist bent — after the composition of his remarkable solo piano work *Flow Form* in 1987, he withdrew for ten years to consider the implications of its sparse textures and sprawling liquidity. When he returned in 1996 with a piano piece to mark the 50th birthday of Michael Finnissy, *Finnissy Fifty*, his music's even sparser surfaces had developed deeper structural undercurrents. Price's performances make a powerful case for these works — and the latter *Flow Form* 3 — being unmissably neglected. Two fine ensemble pieces complete the disc: ...*Purs Sweeney Of Shore To Bend Of Bay*, has a painterly quality as different instrumental lines out against quiet landmarks, while *The Jumper* is quite simply one of the widest and most unmitigated musical experiences I've heard.

## MORTON FELDMAN VIOLIN AND STRING QUARTET OGRECEGREGS BA117904607 3CD

The premiere recording of the companion to Feldman's widely known *Piano And String Quartet* follows on from violinist Christina Fong's scintillating recordings of Cage's valedictory number pieces. Fong has a penchant for dealing with the demands of padding extended structures, and with *The Russian Quartet* she brilliantly combines a sense of freedom and weaving liquidity. The first hour finds the solo violin pushing against the rest, asphyxiating harmonies of the string quartet, filling the listener with expectant intrigue. In its final hour, Feldman's harmonies and textures gradually pare down until skeletal-bodied pizzicato figures push against blurred tunings. It's quite a trip — disturbing and fulfilling in equal measure — making a revealing contrast to the erotic soundworld of *Piano And String Quartet*.

## MAURICIO KAGEL HETEROPHONIE WERGO WER045 CD

"It is so dry that after a few minutes one either turns off or discovers countless delights," said Mauricio Kagel about his vast orchestral theatre piece *Heterophonie* (1959-61). The curtain rises with a depiction of music as the orchestra tune. The conductor then rights to imperceptibly beat time, and the piece gradually emerges. A mob of 42 solo instrumentalists — a typically Kagelian paradox — impose order on the skeletal material Kagel has provided, while the rest of the orchestra are locked into sullying notation. These two acts come together with electrifying force, resulting in a glittering, smashed musical form. The work could be a critique of the serial

music being produced by Stockhausen et al at the same time — well, Kagel was always sceptical about the authority of serial processes, and *Heterophonie* contains seeds of the darkly ironic unpicking of such dogma that has since become his trademark. The disc is completed by *Impression Apolline*, in which an organ plays while his three assistants act as him.

## KRONOS QUARTET NUEVO NONEBUCH 70949 CD

Perhaps concluding that there isn't any worthwhile new repertoire, The Kronos Quartet ponder to their lowest commercial instincts with a selection of tacky Latin American arrangements. Heard as a pointless re-scoring, *Sensomeya* — by hard-edged Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas — fits uncomfortably with corporate renditions of tangos and sambas. *Un personal* Louis Texier's theme tune turns up in its original incarnation as Jose Garcia Esquivel's "Miss Sirt". Much like many of The Kronos' targets, The Kronos quartet feel like has-beens, as they struggle to define a convincing direction.

## DANIEL ROTHMAN YES, PHILIP AND ANDROIDS DREAM ELECTRIC SHEEP LOS ANGELES RIVER LAL111 CD

Los Angeles River Records specialise in tentatively short CDs of unprecedented, quirky electronic music. Casting a solo cast net in the form of a mutant instrumentalist, Yes, Philip... is Rothman's response to Philip K Dick. The channel is wired up so that his high frequencies feed back into the instrument, which "illuminates ephemeral voices created by the room's acoustic character". The result is a sparse 28-minute work that puts tiny strands of material under the microscope, so that they reveal many times. The music is at the same time idiosyncratic and alienated, sometimes beautiful yet unerring. Dick would surely have approved of such a combination. The channelist is Boulez's old sidekick David Smejers, who pulls off a remarkable performance with great musicality and nerves of steel.

## KEVIN VOLANS HUNTING: GATHERING BLACK BOX BBN1060 CD

Kevin Volans's angry disagreements with conductor Joseph Sweeney during the premier of his new *Concerto For Orchestra* was recently reported in *Private Eye*, but then Volans has always had media savvy and a habit of being at the right place at the right time. His decorative pan-African saving dances, *Hunting, Gathering* and *White Men Slaves* were eagerly taken up by The Kronos Quartet a decade ago. Here they are again, played by The Duke Quartet in slightly revised versions. If the language of these pieces now seems rather po-faced, then the Sixth String Quartet from 2000 suggests Volans has moved on. He writes that 20th-century music industry maintains high levels of activity and information, and that he's now interested "in eliminating subject matter... my ideal would be the

equivalent of a blank canvas". The whole 24-minute piece therefore telescopes from a single chord. It's all beautifully judged, but "eliminating subject matter" and "blank canvas" — has he not heard of Morton Feldman?

## BARRIE WEBB & FIREBIRD ENSEMBLE PLOT IN FICTION METIER MW00018 CD

## BARRIE WEBB THE JAPAN PROJECT METIER MW00017 CD

Trombonist and conductor Barrie Webb studied with Virko Gialocok, and is now a mainstay of the thriving music department at Huddersfield University. Recorded live in Huddersfield between 1994 and 97, the six pieces on his survey of recent Italian chamber music, *Plot In Fiction*, vividly portray its characteristic exuberance. *Plot In Fiction* itself is a scolding, subtly, minuscule, composed of the embellished style of Italian opera, perhaps crossed with the textual imagination of Luciano Berio. Ghost Christoffer Pedegale navigates his way through Francesco's labyrinthine plot with terrific abandon and stunning virtuosity. Giacomo Scelzi's *Rite* requires clattering Roger Heaton to unfurl long, folk-inspired macaroni lines over sonically asphyxiated ensemble writing, while Ada Giamberini's marvellously ornate *In Un Silenzio* Odradek goes by Enrico Cossigoli and Dario Maggi complete a striking and highly entertaining disc.

The 72 minutes of solo trombone music contained on *The Japan Project* is inevitably more specialist fare, but Webb's commitment and energy carries the day. The project grew out of the impression he left on Japanese composers when he performed there in 1998, after which he produced a series of recordings. It's unfair to single out any composer, but the strange blending of styles in *Sociological Japan* makes Masao Kouchi stand out from the crowd.

## CHARLES WUORINEN LEPTON TZADIK TZ2019 CD

A longtime fan, John Zorn here brings a retrospective of minimalist American composer Charles Wuorinen to his label. The weighty ensemble work *New York Notes* (1982) is outrageously good. Wuorinen has an agile ear for judging the busiest, most densely woven of instrumental textures and filling them with beautifully refined ideas. The piece expertly builds tension through its 25-minute duration, until it shreds energetically into the sky like an imposing skyscraper. *Lepton* is a more delicate work for the unusual line-up of celesta, harp and piano, for which Wuorinen provides a score that makes cogent use of their sustain and attack. The massive electronic work *Time's Encomium* from 1969 is a breath product of its age, yet its elemental force and sudden surges of impulsive sounds are quotessential Wuorinen. The anti-fanfare with a string in its tail, *Epithalamium* for two trumpets brings this remarkable CD to a disarming close. □



# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

## GATE THE LAVENDER HEED 3 PRECIOUS METAL PWT CD

### THE WISHER TABLE PRECIOUS METAL PWT CD

Good luck tracking down these tiny pressings, released through New Zealand's stalwart avant-rockers Michael Morley's Precious Metal label. On *Gate's* The Lavender Heed 3, Morley moves away from the sprawling hyper-noise rock of his work in The Dead C to enter into the realm of electronics. His woozy guitar bluntness whips in a turgid, bass-heavy distortion is definitely present, but here it's secondary to electrical's non-specific breakbeats, cosmic pulsations and electronic squalls, all muddled by Morley's effects and amps. Truth be told, in the past he has frequently chosen his samples carlessly, and The Lavender Heed 3 continues that bad habit with its far too obvious station of "This Heats The Fall Of Saigon".

Dating from 1997 but only now seeing the light of day, *The Wisner Table* is much better. On this album Gate are James Kirk, Sally Milnerman and Nathan Thompson, alongside Morley. Even as a full group they make the sloopy, smeared drudge rock that defines Gate's quintessential recordings, *Atroc* and *The Daw Line*. Overlaid in grey noise tones, Morley's lazy guitar strum and equally lethargic voice have the intelligibility and pathos of an old drunk mumbling through a megaphone. With its exceptional representations of alcoholic and despair, Morley appears more comfortable on *The Wisner Table* than Gate's recent, interesting forays into lo-fi electronics.

## GOEM GAST MUTEX/MYXCD 10

Montreal's annual Mutec Festival of Sound and New Technology was headlined last year by a large contingent of the usual microsound suspects in Richard Chartier, Tyler Despres, Kim Cascone, Mike Stavitsand and Goem. Having developed an online intertribal community with a very specific aesthetic agenda, these artists took every opportunity to collaborate with each other over the five days of Mutec, and Goem's Gast documents this collaborative spirit. Here, the Dutch duo of Frans De Waard, Peter Dumeleins and Roel Meekhof have infused their extremely sterile monophony with the equally minimal voices of Chartier, Despres, and Stavitsand, Mitchell Ayres, Richard O. Santo, Bill and Elab Chartier is particularly evident in the incremental surging of a series of acidic squiggles behind an incredibly slow loop of discolored bass tones, while Stavitsand actively introduces more qualitatively punchy rhythms. Even so, Gast doesn't have much to add to Goem's already unnecessarily large catalog, being no better and no worse than the others

## FELIX HESS AIR PRESSURE FLUCTUATIONS EDITION RX 2 CD RZ0014 CD

"There is a CD containing a recording of air pressure fluctuations," state the sleeve notes to this field recording from German sound artist

Felix Hess. Operating within the infrasound end of the audio spectrum between 0.05 and 50 Hz, Hess had to construct a tri-axial recording system to crank up the frequencies and reproduce them at 360 times their original speed to make them audible. The results are quite amazing. The CD's turbulent cockings, high pitched whines, streaked whistling tones and a soft wash sounding like gentle earfluff thicken into a complex taxonomy of the inaudible tones of daily life. The "rainfall," Hess explains, is actually the culmination of doors opening and closing; the continuous drone derives from the Atlantic Ocean's standing waves; and the upsurge that repeats every four minutes is an announcement for the break of dawn, when the city collectively rises from its slumber and shatters the night's stiffness with an omnipresent urban din. This document is undeniably impressive, but you know to wonder if its sounds are simply the unintended residue of the technology required to document them.

## LOVELIESCRUSHING GLISSUCEUR SONIC SURF 850A CD

By now, Kevin Shields should give up on coining My Beady Eyed's follow-up to Lovelies. In the decade he has taken this by with nothing to show, Chicago duo Loveliescrushing are just one of the many outfits who have been inspired by Shields's transcendent reconfigurations of the guitar's raw energy into cascades of voluptuous sound. Yet, though Melissa Arpin-Henry and Scott Cortez drew on the MBV sound, they aren't interested in taking it further out there, into regions explored by Rafael Nieto's distilled audio impressionism or Truen's post-industrial surrealism. With its rhythms at all and barely any chords to speak of, the shapeless violence of Chartier's beatfully sculpted pulses and Arpin-Henry's non-linear sing vocalizations belongs onto the faintest semblance of a song. Yearning for the narcotic swoon of collapsing into unconscious states of blurry ecstacy, the duo detail the bliss of existential freefall.

## KIYOSHI MIZUTANI YOKOSAWA-IRI CMR CMR 1 CD

Although he has been concentrating on his solo work since 1989, Kiyoshi Mizutani is still best known for his contributions to early Mercurio. Most recently he has worked with manipulated environmental recordings. Since his *Bird Songs* album for Grand Faux a few years ago, Mizutani has refined his techniques to the point where he can now filter out such of the ambient microphone has that played that otherwise fine album. On *Yokosawa-iri*, his offering a collection of sonic details from a *satoyama*—that is, a traditional form of Japanese agriculture where the village harmoniously coexists with the surrounding environment. Though it is undoubtedly edited, Mizutani's account documents its delicate balance of natural and manmade sounds. The clanging footsteps and shallow breathing of children at play complement the crackle of rain falling on sapling trees and

the wind spralling past the microphone, while a table saw grinds through a piece of wood.

## OST SEIMLSTE OLYPTIC CHORD CD/92LP

Throughout a career spent abstracting electronics into wilfully difficult sonic fractals, Chris Ouglas has been dogged by the electronic criticism that he uses too many factory presets and samples. Given how much of his work presents into the constantly mutating cacophony of such records as *Rook Valley's Fucking Twists* and *Messed It*, these criticisms don't amount to much. Yet Ouglas's latest venture under his OST moniker takes a drastic turn away from the post-Alex dross machine abuse of his *Phthal* albums, instead going down the path of code crunching with the use of such powerful programs as Max/MSP and SuperCollider. Unfortunately, Ouglas has done a poor job in making the transition between his drum machine programming and the manipulation of pre-existing files, focusing almost entirely upon the generation of digital noise. Given the advances of *Fennex*, Stephen Mithrey and Gertie Nicolas have made with the same technology, Seimlste is a clumsy step backwards.

## MATT SHOEMAKER WARUNG ELUSION THEATRE ORBIS/NO 20223 CD

Shoemaker is arguably the least well known artist on Bernhard Giger's trieste oeuvre. His latest piece of musique concrete dynamism should increase the value of his work. Giger aptly described his work in onomastic terms. Like a documentary film maker zooming from a wide field of vision down to a tightly framed shot, Shoemaker brings vast details into close focus. *Warung Elusion* opens with very quiet, fractalistic of grey chords and washed out frequencies, which steadily expose their origins as forest field recordings. Bird choruses blur and electric tones and collaged sounds of rain and wind innocently caressing the trees. These are counterpointed with more unsettling natural noises, like the harsh creaking of branches or hurried splashes through shallow water. While Shoemaker is not as extreme as, say, German film director Werner Herzog, whose *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo* movies equated the rainforest with "organised murder," he also wants to make it clear that not all in the great outdoors is cute and fuzzy.

## TOSHIYA TSUNODA PIECES OF AIR LUCKY KITCHEN 018 CD

Who hasn't held a shell to their ear to listen to the sea? There's an inherent fascination with simple acoustic effects, which Toshiya Tsunoda explores here with the conceptual rigour of early experimental music, accepting and documenting the results without interfering. For four of the first five tracks he placed microphones inside metal pipes of varying lengths and partially or totally immersed in sea water to "observe resonance change according to the fluctuating space volume inside the object determined by wave

motion." Track two uses a pipe but was recorded in an art gallery, featuring radio transmissions and the ambient noise of visitors. For track five he placed two unidirectional mics in the middle of a field and captured the sound of an aircraft passing overhead with breathtaking precision. He also set up on a hillside, on a rocky coast in windy weather and in a cedar forest, interspersing these field recordings with more rigorous acoustic experiments with signal separators, test tones reflected in conical spaces and beat phenomena recorded by placing mics inside a wire bottle (resonant frequency 120 Hz) and bombarding it with sinewaves of 121 and 111 Hz respectively. Coldly scientific as his processes sound, the resulting music is utterly compelling. On track seven's field recording of onsets, Tsunoda's curving marriage breaks down the barrier between "natural" and "artificial" with the sophistication of traditional Japanese architecture. For the penultimate track he fixed his mics made a metre-long float and recorded the passage of a fishing boat through the bay, with astounding results. The final track, however, is over better. Tsunoda set up on a third floor balcony in Istanbul and recorded the surrounding mezzanine's madcap call to prayer. One by one the muezzins enter, until a vast chorus of overlapping melismatic invests the listening space with thrilling results. (Dan Warburton)

## VARIOUS ... EDITION: RXV CD

Manifesting a predilection for elliptical punctuations, the *Atlanta Based Edition*... label presents this curiously titled compilation, which may or may not be relevant to its title with the highly specific technical data scattered throughout its elusive silences. The set presents precise information as pure scientific fact. Only here they are applied to open-ended investigations of monology by artists like Howard, Colin Potter, Cronley, AJR and by Barzme, who have crafted one electron swirls out of shimmer, pure digital tones and digital squiggles. However, the manic bleeping of seismic data triggered by a series of underground nuclear tests in India in 1998 skewers the compilation's agenda towards a more paranoid and ambivalent view of technology.

## WORMS PELICAN SONGS TULIP THRU 11 CD

Worms' track rock miserabilism is a little known side project of the scarcely better known Finnish noise rockers Teräset. Pelican Songs opens brilliantly with "Mackley: The Most Fabulous Insurance, Pelican Song" a 25 minute epic of monstrous downer psychedelia. The centre of the set lights up accordingly, even as it retains their nonspecific map through heavily medicated slowcore tracks cycled through patterns of barely strummed guitar chords. But *Let Pessonen's* bantane is mixed too low, his droning, off-key lullabies coming across as a little too self-conscious. However, Worms end as they began with a slow motion assertion of Arctic power. □

# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Stargazers: scenes from Andy Warhol's *Factory Floor*

## STARGAZER: THE LIFE, WORLD AND FILMS OF ANDY WARHOL

STEPHEN KOCH

MARCH 2014 PBM \$25.95

BY DAVID KEEGAN

"He is an artist whose glamour is rooted in despair," Stephen Koch writes of Andy Warhol in 1973. "Meditating on the flesh, the murderous passage of time, the obliteration of the self, the unavailability of ordinary living. As against them, he proposes the momentary glow of a presence, an image — anyone's, if only they can leap out of the fade-out of inexistence into the presence of a star."

Throughout *Stargazer*, Koch's thesis — and it's a good one — is that the reason Warhol's work speaks to us so directly is it deals with "the aftermath of the instance", the pathos of a moment passing and as such, rather than characterizing Warhol's work as signalling — like Duchamp's before him and countless chances

since — some kind of "end of art," what counts is it is the power of his images, the talismanic force they exert over the spectator. "Their primary impact is one of perfectly astonishing visual immediacy," Koch states, qualifying it with the assertion that "immediacy is transience." This essentially romantic notion makes a lot of sense — films like *The Chelsea Girls* and *Empire* ("Watch the sun rise above it in your room," sang John Cale on *Songs for Drella*, "Wallpaper art, a great view") and harrowing portraits like the *Disaster Series* or *Five Deaths* Eleven Times in Orange passes an immediately transferring power and remain forcibly suggestive. Indeed, from this distance, decades away from the aspects of formal innovation that made them seem so startling at the time and even further away from the moments he chose to set in time, Warhol's best work is undoubtedly great art, framed as it is against the annihilating crush of eternity.

Koch's book was originally published in 1973,

and as such it's one of the few contemporaneous books written about Warhol, although even back then Koch was clear-eyed enough to realize that Warhol's best work was already behind him. At the close of the 60s, the decade most associated with Warhol, he closed the doors on the junkies, the street trash and the "necromass of doom" that defined *Lower Bohemia* and that had inspired him for so long after SCUM Manifesto author Valerie Solanas took advantage of The Factory's open door policy and shot him three times in the leg so he brought to an end the dialectic between "Upper" and "Lower" Bohemia that had been central to his work.

Koch's descriptions of the characters inhabiting the First Factory — "where nobody could tell the dancer from the dance" — are priceless eyewitness accounts. He talks of the shared refusal that "threw together mute senosies like the composer La Monte Young with hardened, quick-witted, druggy street performers with

names like Rotten Rita," and documents the vital role of players like Billy Name and Paul Morrissey, who are often relegated to merely being members of Warhol's entourage. He also makes all sorts of subculturally literate connections between like-minded artists like film maker Jack Smith, although he's a real square when it comes to *The Velvet Underground*, whose music he unfortunately characterizes as "vicious 'bad' murdering." Nevertheless he in-depth chapter-length analyses of Warhol's major 60s flicks are astutely on the money. But best of all he cuts through all the obfuscatory "pop art" rhetoric and reveals Warhol as the significant milieu that he truly was, accurately mapping the social milieu that he fostered and that birthed his art while simultaneously revealing the central tenets of that work without allowing himself to be distracted by all of the surrounding cultural effluvia. That he was able to undertake it all as it happened makes his achievement all the more remarkable. □

## RECOLLECTING FROM THE PAST: MUSICAL PRACTICE AND SPIRIT POSSESSION ON THE EAST COAST OF MADAGASCAR

RON EMOFF

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS Pbk \$19.95

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

Madagascar is the magnetic pole of mystery on this planet. Nearly all of its flora and most of its fauna exist nowhere else. The genetic provenance of its 14 million, mostly rural inhabitants is, at best, uncertain. The massive island is moored off Africa's southeastern coast, yet its populace divided into some 18 recognized ethnic groups, appear to be products of Polyneesian ancestry. Oceanic, Asian, African and Arab traders frequent its ports, yet Madagascar's music has largely resisted outside influences. Although diversified by varying ethnicity, the everyday music of the Malagasy people has been little impacted by Islamic or European ventures. The charming notes of the cylindrical valiha harp, the luscious ostinatos of the lalanga guitars, retained below accidents, the insistent pulse of the sakalava shavers: all are signature to the island's wholly unique culture.

In the larger measure, Malagasy music exists below mass media's radar. The country is impoverished, and acquiring new musical equipment is as much an impossibility as repairing instruments damaged or split by the most climate that as much of Madagascar's

music reaches the West as it does is nothing less than remarkable, which may explain the exhilarating strength of its allure for those newly exposed to its sound.

While a college radio programmer, Ron Eloff happened upon recordings of this music and, like many Westerners hearing early recordings issued by Radio France's Ocoro label, was immediately smitten. Years later, as a music professor at Ohio State University, he has published an absorbing account of his fieldwork in Madagascar. *Recollecting From The Past* details Eloff's study of music and its relationship to spirit possession ceremonies known as *tomba*. A word, as he notes early on, possessed of sufficient polyvalence to embody multiple meanings: a royal ancestral spirit inhabiting a medium, the possession ceremony itself and the belief system lending credence to the practitioners of spirit possession on the island. And, as Eloff adds, for non-believers, *tomba* is a pejorative term.

*Tomba* ceremonies enable the living to commune with the dead, the former seeking advice and reassurance from their departed relatives. The inhabitants of Madagascar's eastern coast, the *tambaran* region, are relied on as primitives by more genteel ethnics. Yet they attribute a natural connection with the spirit world to the *Belohisarana*, native to the southern coast, who migrate to Tambaran in

search of work. Like the Nubians of Egypt or displaced southern blacks in American factory towns, the Antandroy keep to their own in a new environment. Their *tomba* ceremonies are more solemn and reserved for their own kind.

Marty of Eloff's accounts are noted in the notion of 'self and others'. The epistemology extends from the self-obsessed Antandroy within the context of Malagasy society outward to the author's position as an observer whose perceptions may be coloured by long-standing notions of exoticism and foreignness. Contemporary ethnographers tend to work sideways (justifying the ideological stance that informs their writing). Eloff is no exception, cross-referencing the root inquiries of his monograph for pages on end. Like a dance band climatologist resolving a dancing solo in time for the next chorus, he references his afield subject just as the reader is in danger of losing the story's thread amidst comparisons with the work of leading lights in ethnomusicology. To this end, Eloff is well grounded, steeped as he is in the writings of Charles Keel, Chris Waterman, Viet Ehlmann and numerous others who have opened up African music to Western readers.

Eloff's self-consciousness is more a show of consideration for his subjects, while never losing objectivity, he treats even the more picaresque *tomba*-rites with something like affection. *Tomba* has been threatened with extinction by European missionaries and the edicts of colonial governments, a danger lessened somewhat with

Madagascar's independence in 1960. Often, if a musician's instrument is damaged, his career perishes owing to ubiquitous poverty. All too aware of the evanescent aspects of this arcane practice, Eloff becomes a participant, learning to play the valiha and participating in *tomba* ceremonies. At one of these, he meets a couple of politically derived spirits, Sadim Hoseny and George Minsay (the latter being a hybrid of Presidents Bush and Clinton and possibly the latter's nemesis, Monica Lewinsky). Though the music of the groups studied by Eloff has been documented on individual discs issued by Ocoro (Rays Antandroy and Rays Belohisarana), the vivid descriptions of *tomba* and its accompanying liturgical music beg for an accompanying compact disc. The book's appendix compensates in some measure, with a lengthy (but by no means complete) discography.

Perhaps the ultimate success of Eloff's account lies in his adherence to the Malagasy aesthetic known as *matsela*. Meaning 'good talk', it is the island's take on multi-disciplinary art, combining sound, performance and historical allusion, stemming from the local custom of lengthy formulaic proclamations to friendly conversations. He admits that his own presentation lacks actual sound, but *Recollecting From The Past* more than makes up the difference with its galvanizing descriptions of a culture, by turns spooky and dignified, that continues to fly below mass media's radar. □

## AVANT ROCK

BILL MARTIN

OPEN COURT Pbk £16

BY JIM HAYNES

What does it mean to rock? Any number of sub-, mini-, macro-genres – avant rock, out rock, art rock, post-rock – have been proposed over the years to categorise, qualify and challenge rock's main musical assumptions. While every ghetto of cultural production needs specific vocabularies to expedite communication, these terms are wholly useless to accurately explain how the music sounds, how it relates within the broader contexts of history, politics and philosophy, or how it qualifies as rock's avant-garde. Bill Martin's scholarly investigation of 'avant rock' begins with the good intentions of offering an explicit definition of its subject matter. However, he recognises the improbability of compiling an ever-expanding aesthetic discourse under a single banner, and instead presents a set of clues for readers to work out avant rock's definition for themselves.

This book comes on the historical dialogue between the avant-garde questions of rock and the avant-garde of its two aesthetic neighbours

— jazz and classical composition — with taken roots to hip-hop and electronics. Speaking in a voice that is congenial and always celebratory, he litters his text with lists of mainstream and avant-favorites such as The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and Pat Metheny, plus those championed by the underground, such as Sonic Youth, Stereolab and Jim O'Rourke. Interjected throughout such pleasures, Martin develops a considerable amount of space to non-rockers like John Cage, Cecil Taylor, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Glenn Gould and Xiao Oons. These citations are obviously intended to form parallels and analogies between the established avant-garde of jazz and classical and the amorphous terrain of rock's avant-garde.

However, Martin would do better to differentiate between the historical avant-garde and the contemporary avant-garde. Despite the preponderance of typical postmodern quotations of Cagean indeterminacy, Derridean deconstruction and Deleuzian rhizomes, he always returns to a historically uniform model of the avant-garde blinged upon an outdated notion of the artist as modernist genius. This is specifically discomfited within his repeated

references to the "teleology of cultural production" within a concrete narrative towards that which is 'new'. This 'best step in the logic'/'another logic altogether' dynamic (which) came to define, I would argue, the avant-garde of classical music, jazz, and then rock — I would dare say that this dynamic still defines the avant-garde in art and intellectual pursuits generally."

Yes, that's Old School, dude. His thoughts are eerily similar to those of 50s American critic Clement Greenberg, who heralded abstract expressionism as the logical path from the European avant-garde of surrealism and dada through an ontological understanding of a medium's essence. Greenberg's arguments and coding of artists ultimately led to some of America's most bonding contributions to art history. Furthermore, like Greenberg, Martin asserts his aesthetic prescriptives upon a theoretical discussion, placing '70s Prog rock with its escapist trajectory out of the 60s into the fiction of Yes, Magnum and King Crimson as the ideal example for avant-rock's delirium.

Beyond these problematic assertions, Martin's biggest failing is in his inability to heed his own

declaration, "to take a step that called the different arts themselves into question". Aside from the apologetic rhetoric on Prog rock where he clearly articulates the successes and failures of that subgenre, he never even begins to question how the institutional and administrative forces, ranging from the museum (such as the habits of the 'sones') to the corporate (such as networking, self-promotion and stage managing), have negatively impacted rock's avant-garde. Taking on a role as the cheerleader for the home team, he instead valorises the artists mentioned earlier alongside every other. This falling stands as a warning for every critical voice, including that of this magazine. Criticism at its best should judge any artistic practice by the success, or otherwise, of the work itself — not by how many grants an artist gets or how cool somebody else perceives it to be. Only after that investigation is complete can the critic begin to extract and reconcile the hidden periodicals that terror cultural production. While I honestly believe that Martin truly loves all of the music he writes about, his uncritical celebration of it becomes his undoing. □



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"An integrated component within a complex web of sound": Betty Carter

## OPEN THE DOOR: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF BETTY CARTER

WILLIAM R. BAUER

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS \$36.95/\$21.50

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In his excellent *Jazz: An Introduction*, Edward Lee comments that "The [jazz] singer... was confronted with the problems of reconciling straight versions of sentimental songs and intractable words with the vastly different jazz ethos. That any succeeded at all is remarkable." In fact, he continues, "the style which Billie Holiday used so creatively was not a beginning but an end. The reason was that music among directly and without compromise from the Afro-American tradition came to achieve mass acceptability." Figures like Betty Carter—who sings "as often dissonant obligato to the unheard theme"—are therefore succeeding against the odds. Carter herself had a sense of this when she commented to Art Taylor in 1972, "After me there are no more jazz singers. What I mean is there's nobody scoring me to death. No young woman is giving me any trouble when it comes to singing; jazz. I'm not even wanted about it and that's a shame."

Whether or not her pessimism was justified, success against the odds is what she achieved, and it's the theme of William Bauer's marvellous new biography of the singer, when he interviewed extensively before her death in 1998. The title belongs with the growing body of jazz biography—Lewis Porter on Coltrane, Pettigrew on Bill Evans, Wodecki on Parker—which combines critical intelligence and authority

with accessibility. Bauer's book is as stylishly written as the best of these, and it's hard to imagine it being bettered.

Born in Detroit, Carter's first job was with Lionel Hampton's big band for two years from 1948. Although she was one of the last jazz singers to have her roots in the big band era, she was committed to the bebop ideal—Hampton called her as "Betty Bebop," a collaboration in the early 60s with Ray Charles—who said her voice had a "floating quality that haunted me"—seemed to push her to the brink of stardom. But then came the implosion of the jazz market; the clubs closed and work dried up. As Bauer explains, her commitment to "jazz puns" cost her dear in terms of performance opportunities, and it wasn't till the late 70s that the singer finally got her due.

Carter had harsh things to say about jazz singers who took a pop direction, and also criticised free jazz and jazz-rock fusion. But unlike many similar complaints, these stemmed from a radical creative vision—originality was her lifelong preoccupation. Carter's jazz purism was connected to her identification of the music with black audiences, and Bauer comments that "Carter felt that the decline of jazz as a cultural force in the 1960s grew from a fragmentation of the community that sustained it, and she battled this decline mightily, both in word and deed".

Jazz singers tend towards either interpretation of the lyrics or instrumental-style improvisation. If Billie Holiday remains unsurpassed in the former approach, Betty Carter probably brought instrumental-style improvisation to the highest level. But the extreme liberties she took with the

melodies of standard songs weren't at the expense of interpretation. Bauer gives a thoughtful account of her approach: "Her revisions frequently masked the lyrics' rhyme scheme...inverting the 'jingle' at phrase endings that can often trivialise a song's message. The resulting interpretations were so far afield of the original melody that they reflected her personal aesthetic only, and the songwriter's not at all".

He explains how she would form an interpretation by speaking the lyrics, spinning a new line out of the words' inherent musical qualities.

You had to hear Betty Carter live—her most famous recording is *The Audience With Betty Carter*, a live cut just rereleased on Verve, which features her theme song "Open The Door" from which Bauer takes his title. He comments that on stage "she became a physical incarnation of the music—bending, turning, twisting, abruptly freezing in tableau, conducting her rhythmic section with the drop of a hand or the slant of a brow". She viewed her recordings as a tool for marketing her live work, and told her bass player Chris White, "I always thought whenever I got on the stage, before an audience, that I had a job to do. And that was to see to it that that audience went out of this club, or this concert hall, or whatever, with a little piece of me on their minds".

Her boldly improvisational approach, noted as Bauer explains in a bebop sensibility, was too stylised for some listeners. Yet because of her generous warmth and ability to communicate, Carter's essentially cool, refined art inspired devotion among audiences. Her

commitment to improvisation meant that she interacted with her musicians rather than, like most singers, treating them as accompanists. In fact, during her last decade her group became known like Art Blakey's as a jazz academy, the high turnover accelerated by her acute demands on young players. It's also very noticeable that in later recordings her voice is mixed low: "an integrated component within a complex web of sound", as Bauer puts it. Her performances increasingly showed a high degree of risk-taking and there was incredible flexibility in tempo changes. Jimmy Scott had influenced her "delay action" or what Bauer calls her extreme "back phrasing"—i.e., singing behind the beat—and this meant that her band needed great discipline, trusting that she would find her way back. She didn't catch up at the ends of phrases as most singers do, but delayed over a long line.

Bauer's book is exhaustively researched and referenced. The author has transcribed 15 of Carter's solos into musical notation, and includes phonetic transcriptions to illustrate her approach to singing lyrics and scatting. But his quite lengthy analyses are justified by the remarkable complexity of Carter's treatment of her material, both standards and originals. Just occasionally the technical terminology gets pretentious; for instance, the singer's lead-back phrasing and pitch bending are examples of "intentionally unmeasured plasticity" (which incidentally is a feature of all kinds of music making, not just jazz). But this is a minor criticism of a quite outstanding musical biography. □

**Dispatches from the digital domain.** This month: Marcus Boon trawls through UbuWeb's massive sound art and concrete poetry archive



Here Ubu and progeny Ubu/Moby's Ken Goldsmith with Allen Ginsberg

**"Visual Concrete: Sound"** announces the sleek, minimalist homepage of *UbuWeb*, giving little indication of the vast store of sonic, visual and textual treasures that lies within. Inside are thousands of MP3s and Real Audio files that archive a vast area in the international history of sound poetry, sound art and concrete poetry. Russian Futurist Vladimir Mayakovsky and Russian Constructivist Vladimir Khlebnikov, Artaud's 1948 road broadcasts, a miscellany of Scots, Latvians and Breton participants including Henri Chapuis and Bob Cobbing, plus more contemporary sound work from the likes of Vito Acconci, and even Czech composer Charles Amkenhiser and teen rock Taylor You'll also find articles from pioneer sound art magazine *Totus*, a complete MP3 set of poet John Glennie's out of print *Poetry Wares LPs*, including the historic *Dad A Poem* series from the early 1970s and the William S. Burroughs collection *William S. Burroughs' 1971-1972* (1979), along with K. It's a large range of selections that document the evolution of the worlds of sound and concrete poetry.

UbuWeb was started in 1996 by New York based visual artist, writer and DJ Kenneth Goldsmith. Charles Bernstein, guru of language poetry at Buffalo University, offered him unlimited server space at the university, and Goldsmith has made full use of it, making UbuWeb the largest resource for the sound/concrete poetry nexus on the Web today.

Growing up on a diet of punk, funk, jazz and 'head music,' Goldsmith was converted to sound art around 1990 while working in his studio in downtown Manhattan. "It was around the time of the first De La Soul LP," he recalls, "and somebody was walking by with a beatbox blasting. And as I listened, it sounded just like musique concrète to me. I thought, 'Wow, someone is walking down Mountain Street playing *Break Henry*!' And I realised it was actually a break between two rap tunes. With Hiphop, you could take any sound at all, even the most abstract ones, and the minute you put a beat behind it, it's legitimized. Whereas if you take the beat out, it becomes completely illegitimate and has no place in the culture."

Goldsmith's made this flagrantly his modus operandi on his *WUWU* radio show, *Unpopular Music on Air!* and *Music*, which has become infamous for the sonic headlocks it broadcasts to New Yorkers. His own work has walked a fascinating path between concrete poetry, John Cage and HipHop. When a project with rapper Del The Funky Homosapien fell through, he entered into collaboration with vocalist Joan La Barbara on a book/CD called *13 Poems*. While a lot of language poetry sounds pretty academic, Goldsmith's interest in HipHop has given his work a verbiage that's firmly rooted in everyday NYC language and experience. Spoiling of his book *No. 111* 2.7.93-10.20.96, a loose catalogue of found and

processed words, he notes, "I was listening to a lot of rap, but seeing the connection between James Joyce and rap in the compounding of words 'Funidooobiest' could be something ripped out of *Finnegans Wake*."

He sees the Web in the same terms. "For a long time, the URL for [sports shop] Modell's wasn't modell.com," he explains, "it was [gstaagbomas.com]: it's out of Hip-hop culture and it's out of Finnegans Wake. The Web is the manifestation in concrete language terms of the meaning of Hip-hop and Jive."

Because the Internet provides an enormous archive of sound, Goldsmith sees the future of sound poetry being digital and Web-based. As an example, he cites Stock,hausen & Wollman's "Flogging", from *Vertigating Deer*, which contains a sample of Henn Chopin's sound poem classic "Rough". "Everybody's grabbing stuff from the Web, including *UbuWeb*," remarks Goldsmith.

Asked whether he's had any copyright difficulties after making such a vast collection of proprietary audio material available, he shakes his head. "If John Gorno called me and told me he was putting the Poetry Works stuff back in print, I'd take it slow tomorrow because the job would be done. The distribution for these things are extremely marginal in the first place: mostly they just die, or become collector's items. None of the

MP3s on UbuWeb are in print. The Herri Chopin all comes from out of print vinyl. I'd never take a print Alga Marghen record and put it up. I realise there's no economy there, and I'm not going to take money out of the hands of people that are doing good work. I'll put up Real Audio files, but the sound quality there is degraded to the point that it just stimulates sales for the CDs."

Goldsmith sees UbuWeb (on which he is an anonymous presence, and for which he receives no money) as an example of the way in which the Web functions as a gift economy: Low production costs and free distribution make possible a utopian conception of hitherto unknown experimental richness. "The Web is a new way of giving shit away — in a major way," he enthuses. "And the Web is made for poetry. The avant garde remains the counterculture — non-narrative, opaque, things without beats and stories, things that are word. As the culture gets more and more oriented towards rock, beats,

There and we're oriented towards pop, blues, and R&B – rhythm and capitalism – this stuff is just forgotten. There was a moment where the avant-garde and the main culture came together in the 60s, when The Beatles were talking about Stockhausen and Cage, all that crossover stuff. The 80s killed it. So this stuff remains as potent as ever. Nobody makes money doing this, so why not give it away? It's beautiful." **LibuWeb:** [www.libu.com](http://www.libu.com). Goldsmith's writing is at [www.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/](http://www.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/). His music website is at [www.wfnu.us/~lswm2/](http://www.wfnu.us/~lswm2/).

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Part of a glut of music zines online, London-based **Absorb** ([www.absorb.org](http://www.absorb.org)) are unlearned Werhaphelms, and offers articles and news on various electronic faces such as Schematic, Funkstörung and Mousse On Mars like – read this while listening to Radio Absorb. **Noisepop** ([www.noisepop.com](http://www.noisepop.com)) is a community inviting contributions from its visitors. Apart from up-to-date events listings, you'll find reviews and interviews with: Chris, Philip Jack, Herbert and (remember him?) Guido. **Sonoma** ([www.sonomamusic.com](http://www.sonomamusic.com)) has grown out of the busy London based **Stat501** ([www.stat501.com](http://www.stat501.com)), a collective comprising WebTV channel **The Skam** ([www.skam.com](http://www.skam.com)) and links machine **Musilbee** ([musilbee.com](http://musilbee.com)).

Sonoma ("Sound Noise Music") is now taking over from what used to be **Motion** ([motion.state51.co.uk](http://motion.state51.co.uk)): a myriad of reviews of artists ranging from Aphex Twin to Frances-Mae.

You. You can opt to receive updates, and it promises a future where you can add your own reviews to create a music forum. All this to the soundtrack of whatever's rocking Sonorus's beat in their radio send. **The Milk Factory** ([www.themilkfactory.co.uk/](http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/)) is another good source for reviews. Heavy on electronics, their monthly issues may be less eclectic than Sonorus, but their list is well used and all reviews are followed by a handy discography and artist links. **HipHop, R&B, Techno, two-step Garage** is the obnoxious over at **Hyperdude** ([www.hyperdude.co.uk/](http://www.hyperdude.co.uk/)). If you can't get into the hype about London's new Garage princes, jump right to the genre. **Noshe** Edna's appraisal of "digital rock" **N\*E\*R\*D** and **Sonoe** Reynolds' thorough survey of **Ectasy** in **HipHop Connecticut's Fake Jazz** ([www.fakejazz.com/](http://www.fakejazz.com/)) publishes semi-regular issues covering avant, rock, jazz, and esoteric/electronic. With

personal writing and a incongruous section of "birds who are cooler than you," *Fawlty Towers* is a worthy stop over for anyone looking for second opinion before buying a CD. John Darnielle at [Last.Fm.Planet.com](http://Last.Fm.Planet.com) is short on advice but big on ideas. "Famosa" for being the man behind underground-to-fiers The Mountain Goats, Darnielle lives in Iowa and the list-zine is only available in selected shops, so the site is as close as you're likely to get to this publication. Full of personal anecdotes, the "Amnesia diary," a personal journal through Radiohead's music, shows you inside Darnielle's head. With articles, reviews, interviews, MP3s, illustrations, photographs, *Newsies* ("Art Music Music") ([www.newsies.net](http://www.newsies.net)) covers contemporary music across the board, including movies. This smooth, tastefully awesb site will keep you coming back.

ANNE HILDE NESSET

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# On Location

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## FREEDOM OF THE CITY 2002 LONDON CONWAY HALL

UK

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Once again, the Freedom Of The City festival consumed seven lengthy afternoons/evenings seasons of 'radical improvised music' into a four day weekend. Underlying themes of this year's event included a celebration of the late John Stevens, who was referred to on a number of occasions, and the notion of 'the workshop'. Stevens was one of the instigators of improvisation workshops in London during the late 1960s, and his methods and materials have influenced several generations of players. Eddie Prevost, another instigator, programmed two groups (Processions 1 and 2) that were convened from participants in his current workshop. And on the festival's opening night, The Gathering, a workshop run by Maggie Nicols, fielded 30 performers for an extravaganza entitled *Nuts In May*.

*Nuts* included 18 instrumentalists, nine voices, a painter of woody abstractions and a dancer whose frozen contortions suggested nothing but emotional distress. Over the heads of the audience (literally and possibly figuratively), from wires strung across the auditorium, artist Gina Southgate slid a series of objects — a plastic laundry bin lid with trailing tentacles made of cellophane, a xylophone keyboard of white plastic penis cutlery, blocks of polystyrene foam painted with the kind of tinted cellophane in which flowers are wrapped, etc. — and adjusted their posture using, among other things, a

shrimp net with an elongated handle. This precarious activity, and those of the painter and dancer, bore no discernible relationship to the music. In the 1960s we would have called this a Happening.

The accommodating nature of Nicols's workshop is reflected in its title. The Gathering is an open house in which musicianship isn't necessarily the pinnacle of achievement. Although, for this performance, seasoned musicians such as Charlotte Hug, Vanya Weston and Tim Chant were in attendance, they operated as ensemble players rather than soloists, and the emphasis was on collective effort. That said, the structure of *Nuts In May* was sophisticated, and the ensemble handled its complexities rather well. Embedded within the improvisation were three of John Stevens's guided improvisations, and there were four poetry interludes. The concluding poem, delivered by its author, saxophonist Richard Leigh, was a touching tribute to Stevens himself.

*Nuts In May* was highly entertaining despite its disparities and incongruities. But the best music of the evening was played by cellist Mark Westall and trumpeter Matt Davis, who turned in a taut, meticulously controlled set. Although the audience paid close attention to the quiet tentative interplay between Westall and Davis, they grew restless during the set by Procession 1, in which the music was passed like a baton from stage right to stage left via overlapping duets. Bass clarinetist Sandy Kindness and pianist Roberto Filaseta played well, but the most startling and imaginative intervention occurred when saxophonist Olive Mayne began his duet with guitarist Anthony Guerra by repeatedly lifting one end of his instrument and coaxing it down onto the stage, then alternately running the bass together and lightly tapping them with his fingertips to sound the notes. This combination of

delicacy and violence upped the ante considerably.

On the last afternoon of the festival, Procession 2 picked up where Mayne left off with a music of ritualised violence that, for 25 minutes or so, was bracing, but thereafter became wearisome. The quartet of screeching vocals, laptop, bass guitar, electric guitar and drums was augmented by Evan Parker on soprano saxophones. This was Parker at his most creatively interactive. The way he dug into the music was very different from how he had played two days earlier, in duet with saxophone guitarist John Russell. Although Russell came bold and challenging ideas into the stream of Parker's multiphonics, he couldn't deflect the saxophonist from his chosen course. It was interesting music, if a little lopsided. But what Parker and Russell had, and the Procession 2 players generally lacked, was a sense of proportion. Percussionist Tim Goide, playing a kit so monumental it looked like every Prag-rock drummer's wet dream, seemed unable to judge when enough was enough. Martin (laptop) and Raza Lambert (electric guitar) knew how to pace the material, and they sat out most of the set, as did Parker, but Goide bludgeoned on and on without adding anything new, and Martin spent the last ten minutes twiddling his thumbs and looking utterly bemused.

But even highly skilled and savvy musicians sometimes overshoot the mark. Eddie Prevost's duet with cellist Anton Lukoszevics was a case in point. They made a music that was beautifully shaped and packed throughout with interesting developments. Essentially, it was a set of variations minus a theme, interspersed with brief solos, while Lukoszevics swapped bows or Prevost restacked his drums with various bits of tatted metal. But when Prevost subtly tried to

bring the music to a close, Lukoszevics kept on going. A few minutes later it happened again, and after each missed ending the music felt slightly less fresh. However, this surprising lapse of judgment didn't stop their set from being a festival highlight.

Equally impressive were performances by Sylvia Hulst (a small-scale music wit large); the tumultuous but extraordinarily lucid electronics duo Furt; the Phil Minton and Roger Turner duo; and The London Improvisers' Orchestra. The most surprising of these was the Minton/Turner duo, who began very quietly indeed and worked with isolated morsels of sound — Minton's whistling breath, his various yelps and snorts, mirrored by Turner's siltily, skittery percussion — before embarking on a series of flurried exchanges. Their well-paced, imaginative performance drew a huge roar of approval from the crowd, and the festival's most sustained applause.

Of the pieces played by The London Improvisers' Orchestra, those directed by Simon H Fell, Steve Beresford and Caroline Kraabel stood out. All of them consumed structural elements that sustained rather than supplanted improvisation. Beresford's piece, essentially a feature for the trombonist Paul Rutherford, eventually became a performance for virtuoso conductor Fell's ended with a recreation by People Band founder Kerry Day of some words by John Stevens. But Kraabel's was the most ingenious of all. Members of the audience were asked to record on cassette players, for a fixed period of time, the orchestra's performance, after which the cassettes were rewound and set to play just as the orchestra concluded. Orchestra and audience then listened spellbound as these squawking out-of-sync renditions of the piece flickered out all over the auditorium. □

Clockwise from top left: Louis Moholo, Hugh Macaulay, Chris Burn, Sylvia Hulst, Paul Rutherford, Charlotte Hug, Phil Minton & Roger Turner, Jason Yarrow, Francine Luce and John Edwards, Bob Cobbing, Trevor Watts

## LE WEEKEND STIRLING TOLBOOTH

UK

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

For Le Weekend's fifth annual showcase of experimental music, more writer David Keenan was invited to curate four nights of events at the Tolbooth, the impressive new arts centre in Stirling, Scotland. Keenan chose an exciting programme of free jazz and Japanese underground music that unashamedly reflected his personal musical tastes, but also offered an opportunity to hear some excellent new music interspersed with workshops from some of its participants, and a showing of raw video footage presented by fellow Wire contributor Alan Cummings with material from (among others) Kuros Abe, Yau Tawematsu and Ralizes Dénudés.

The opening night set the tone for Le Weekend's theme with rare UK outings from Japanese psychedelic group Shazuka and US saxophonist David S Ware and his quartet. Looking almost ennobled (apart from the group's chunky bass player), Shazuka slowly allowed the almost porcelain fragility of their songs to seepily unfurl before guitarist Maké Mami stamped down on his collection of FX pedals to abruptly tear open another door in the group's sonic dimension. It was this combination of singer Shazuka's Belmer doll-like presence and Maké's confidently hammered and guitar flailing that made them so dark.

The David S Ware Quartet's set was let down badly by the sound, which fluctuated wildly throughout, at one point causing the saxophonist to stalk off to the wings and temporarily allow the rest of the group (William Parker on bass,

clarinet Matthew Shipp and drummer Guillermo E Brown) to play on without him. A further problem arose when Brown's bass pedal broke and had to be replaced. The unwanted interval, filled with crashing about in the aisles, caused Ware to suggest to his bemused audience that they should "pretend that this is part of the music... which, in fact, it really is". When they came back, however, it was with a lively vengeance, with Ware blowing a spiritually evocative performance that was fusion hot in its delivery.

Friday was devoted to bass player William Parker, who, after first giving an illuminating talk about his career, influences and musical philosophy, advised his audience to relax themselves before he and drummer Hamid Drake took to the stage for the evening's first concert. For this mainly percussive set, Parker abandoned his bass and instead played vibes, a set of gongs and a selection of African instruments, alongside Drake's meditative hand drum slapping and tabla tapping. Their passionately played interchanges acted as the perfect prelude for the other half of Parker's quintet, Rob Brown on flute and alto sax with trumpeter Lewis Barnes, to take the stage. The full quartet performance turned out to be the highlight of Le Weekend. An unfettered free jazz scorcher entitled "The Short Dance" featured a bombardment of stunting solos from all of the players, the best of which came from Parker, who stroked his bass line as a Delta blues guitar to produce some incredible sounds from the instrument, and Drake, whose tight, immaculately timed drum solo was quite astonishing to behold. Picking his drumsticks as if they were loaded with pain, Drake's solo was a percussive, abstract masterpiece.

Witnessing Tot Kudo's mythical Maher Shalal Hash Baz on Saturday proved to be an exhilarating experience, although it was only afterwards that the realisation of just how important their performance had been began to sink in. Made up of Kudo leading a seven-piece orchestra of interchangeable musicians playing a variety of instruments (including a euphonium and two laptop computers), together with his partner Rolo on vocals and rotation, MSHB's sense of misanthropic angst, instruments and occasional happening pieces became a continuously evolving creation shrouded with surprises and unforgettable moments. One of these came when Kudo instructed his female drummer to temporarily abandon her instrument and slip along to a composition using a lead as a jump rope: an amazing Fluxus touch that was also beautiful in its suggestion of innocence and childlike spontaneity. Although it would be easy to cast off MSHB as a freakshow — a group of professional musicians who have been directed by their leader to play like some primary school big band — there was something inexplicably special going down here too. When Kudo pulled a pristine pop jewel like "Stone In The River" from his suitcase, for example, whatever my mistrust one might have had for MSHB's seemingly pseudo-primitive musical approach simply melted away as the warm ruse of the group took hold, and everything started to make sense.

The simplicity of Maher Shalal Hash Baz was soon replaced, though, by the more aggressive and futuristic amplified guitar howl of Kaiji Haino, whose intense-focused two-hour set revelled around his covers project, *Ahye*. For this Haino first sculpted a backing riff using a

sampler, over which he then layered further guitar work (occasionally spiked with his urgent vocalising) until it had built into a massive undulating black curtain of shifting sound. The chosen covers were abstract and mostly unrecognisable. Despite being reliably informed by a colleague that his opening number was a version of Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze", what emerged from behind the pulsing, rippled veil of looping cacophony to my ears, sounded more like Haino's attempt to make uneasy contact with Hendrix's tortured soul in the afterlife.

It was in the quarter-second half of his set that Haino really showed just how skilled he is as a guitarist and solo improviser, seamlessly changing the mood with a beautifully realised series of folk-inspired pieces. During one of these, his sampled riffs gathered momentum to produce a scary, looping delirium of escalating guitar riffs that threatened to engulf us all. As the sound illusion reached its zenith, he kicked out at his FX pedal to instantly silence the monster he had just summoned up. After this amazing solo show, Haino was also expected to play a three-hour *Fushitsusha* set in Le Weekend's grand Sunday night finale. Unfortunately this was cancelled when he contracted a severe stomach upset on the morning of the gig, after having over-indulged... in a midnight feast of cream cake. Haino's sudden bizarre illness cast a pall on what had been an memorable series of concerts packed with many precious moments. □

**Le Weekenders:** Maher Shalal Hash Baz leader Tot Kudo, William Parker Quartet (top), Kaiji Haino (below)

## AUBE/JONATHAN COLECLOUGH OSAKA FUKUKAN GALLERY

JAPAN

Recent years have seen Atsuhiko Nakajima's Aube project take several spides forward in terms of concept and execution. He has broadened his palette of unorthodox score materials for composition, and expanded his performance resume to include more site-specific broadcasts (namely a gargantuan, disused site near Morioka, and a Spanish cathedral). Nakajima has also recently taken the more predictable (albeit more practical for travel) route of laptop-based performances, so it was a refreshing

experience seeing Aube within the clandestine confines of a tiny gallery space, powered only by a pair of small keyboard amplifiers.

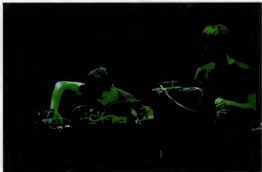
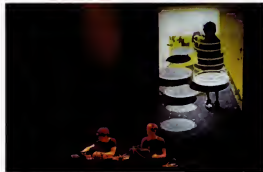
The atmosphere of the unadorned Fukukan (literally "compunct eyes") gallery that evening was provided purely by the soft pinging the low noise floor that it was left entirely to Nakajima to electrically add substance to the space. Those familiar with Nakajima's more elemental style (drawing from the sounds of water or flames) may have been surprised by the deliberately synthesised tones of this performance. For the first 23 minutes he chiselled away a set of seemingly benign high frequency signals into a more intense, over-modulated shape, taking occasional dives into restrained feedback. His

talent, at present, lies in his ability to intensify the simplest sound without the protective barricade of effects often relied on in the newest wave of Japan's low noise movement. His low sound has a unique curvature to it. At this performance it was made more interesting by his current predilection for adding tonality when the noise reached its maximum density.

The following performance by Jonathan Coleclough, a Reading native who has a history of collaborations with Nakajima and occasional Nurse With Wound guru Colin Potter, thankfully avoided direct references to Aube's live set. He opted instead for a Gaussian-blurred pastoral landscape of sorts. In another laptop-driven performance, the two extended pieces delivered

by Coleclough were assembled from aching mid-range drones and punctuated with odd, synthetic murmurs and hecups. There was nothing groundbreaking in terms of composition, but the pieces were sophisticated in their seamlessness and control of the etherial. After a 10-minute, cerebral interlude in which a guest speaker lectured on the CD-ROM of Japanese ghosts, though the subject had no obvious relevance to the performance), Coleclough and Nakajima joined for a duet that explored a completely different sound space than they might have been stronger in companion, the duo finale was a quality addition to the decembrine, 21st century folk art that is "computer music". □





# ONLY CONNECT: SIGUR RÓS & HILMARSSON/MOUSE ON MARS/COIL/PLAID LONDON BARBICAN UK

BY IAN PENMAN & ROB YOUNG

All the omens for successful co-locations between rock and classical music are not good. Remember, for example, the critically execrable Concerto For Group And Orchestra by Osip Purgin and The Royal Philharmonic: worse at the memory of Micaela and The San Francisco Symphony, despite at the last too recent attempts of Sir Paul McCartney to condemn his memories of a bombed Liverpool to a satanic oratorio. So the commissioning of Icelandic blues-rock quartet Sigur Rós to tackle a hitherto discredited chunk of Norse legend the Edda, accompanied by London Sinfonietta and members of the Saitan Choir, in a work called Ódinn's Raven Magic, will inevitably come loaded with all sorts of negative expectations. In the event, though, the presence of two Icelandic voices of experience, as Psychic TV member Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson as co-composer of the piece, and vocal soloist Steinþór Andersen, fused with Sigur Rós's obvious enthusiasm and belief in the project to create a hennous and moving whole.

Lasting upwards of an hour and a half, the piece had over antecedents in the shimmering string works of Henryk Górecki's Third Symphony and the unimpassioned meditations of Arvo Pärt, but they were saved from smoothness by the grainy lyrics of Andersen and by the extraordinary clanging stone mantras which the Sigur Rós quartet jointly played from the bulk of the piece. Looking like the kind of instrument Harry Patch might have built, had he spent time trudging over Iceland's cracked, volcanic tundra, the group picked out the steps on the path through the music's landscape. As Hilmarsson has said, technology has failed to quell Icelanders' connections with pagan roots. The texts, which deal with the journey of Ódinn's ravens sent out to gather knowledge and recover memory, are etched on screen by a treated DV footage of a bird in flight. The mood remained largely ponderous and subdued, with Jón Thor Bergsson rejecting some rumbling glitch rhythms as an underlay to the orchestral textures: only at the end did the group take up their rock instruments and fudge a blinding, white-light conclusion on the snarl of the suite's climactic theme. Considering the music was said 'yet' —

apparently still having its finishing touches earlier that afternoon — Ódinn's Raven Magic will over time be hammered out into a glittering example of pagan minimalism (RP)

The final zpmoot of minds and monitors in the Barbican's Only Connect season — a night the organisers dubbed Play — was meant to be some kind of investigation/celebration of the 'link' between computer games and electronic sound design. Now, it's not exactly hot news that these 'conceptual' mix and match nights (Album Singz Zorr; support by Wild Man Fischer) all too often promise more than they deliver: dream-date theory proves far more alluring than on-stage emcees. And so it proved tonight.

Can a game be played when it is preprogrammed to avoid the hand of chance? Hard not to accuse the tired old pun of 'played out' for Plaid, and leave it at that. If the game(s) conceit already felt perilously past its fag-day date, Plaid's rigid linear loops and beeps, and unspoken pseudo-gimmery felt like something that would have been ungainly ten years ago; or even 20. When NeilKidd did the whole thing a thousand times before, Ex-Black Dog operates Ed Hantley and Andy Turner were faceless white blur, 'fleece' bugs, behind the obligatory bank of big boys' play-ins; the music they 'played' was exactly like Black Dog minus all the interesting stuff: solid and steady rather than occult and out there.

There's a wider problem here, re: the (mis)representation of electronics on stage, one which electronic's major players for the most part manifestly refuse to address. Summed up nicely for me when the night's headliner, Mouse On Mars, came on stage to a rapturous hip-crowd welcome; the MOM fans directly behind me let out a great whoop... and then proceeded to colubinate through what began to unfold. Rave on, MOMmy's boys, 'cos you won't miss much of anything on stage: MOM might have been Plaid — behind hiding their stacks with the same vacant, recessed 'hipness' — back on for MOM twiddle and diddle. Except, if Plaid were all pristine polioesse, MOM were like some monster sonic apperition of modern boys gone hideously jazz-rock cool. Whatever happened to Mouse On Mars? They were shipping up to be played by Cat: now — monodimensional loop faggots, a brutal and vulgar brut attack, but without the fun/light of a Kraftwerk or New Order; or any of the real best juiciness you could locate in any dance club round the corner in Smithfield. This stuporously ludicrously overlaid warm-beam jam was just like some mid-bell 1973 'tuner' group (think Isotope, think Seagull, think miggins), except with different hardware. At least Plaid put on a show.

As do Coil... and then secret Porters of their

all-new set tonight were like, oh, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway rescripted by Samuel R Delany, dressed by Alexander McQueen, and most by NASA: a howling wind-up, a Beltane fury. The only trouble being, you (or they) really need an audience compounded of equal parts Wombles, Radical James and Good Time Groshos; when what they got was a bank of 'I'm so hip, me' London kiamis apparently unable to parse the simple equation that Coil, like so many horror movies, are simultaneously funny AND scary. If my guess that Coil could care less about the vagaries of PlayStation: the video games here are all in their heads — and up on their screen, as it should be pointed out that Coil were the only crew tonight responsible for their own images. As above, so below: where electronics' toy boys are content to let everything (equipment, info, images and, most damning of all, context) be manufactured by others, Coil take a gambol/gamble that any and all communication can be sacred, and (just) successful.

So, hermits in the spotlight. Coil took the stage to the thunderbolt accompaniment of 'Higher Beings Command': John Balance and Simon Norris trolled out like camp commorants, Chelera Marys shaking their signifying chains in the audience's face, blowing incensed smoke up its fat ass. Seized in winding stark white, and laterally avenge upon the flow of new rows, they obviously scored the exit out of all those seen something off to the bowels of the Barbican's underbox.

I've seen Coil live three times in the last two years and, unbelievably, on each occasion they've raised the stakes higher. It has now got to the paradoxical stage where this most shadowy and studio-hermetic of outfits may come to release a live album: if we are to appreciate their full elemental power. Three sets in three years — and three completely different, utterly singular sets. Most groups (especially after the Oylshuf schedule Coil have lately followed) and Balance's neat manner last autumn) might ease down a gear and do a Greatest Hits number. Which is what this was, except that most of the hits are as yet unseen. When their Constant Shallowness set was one long minimalist contra-mime ritual exorcism, designed, as its closing emblem had it, to fuck our minds for good, tonight was something else again. After 'Higher Beings', came traditional set opener 'Amethyst Dreams' (surely one of the most sublime songs of the last decade), but then on it was it was strictly fancy and new. 'A Cold Cat' went from incantation to conformation — mean Chomsky than Getz — with an electric prod of a video to match. There were three new

(long) hypno pulses, including their long promised Burroughs tribute, 'Wounded Golems Tap At The Window', whose lift-off had to be felt to be believed. In truth, I simply surrendered to the pulse, whose multilayered soul and whirr tonight had the added sustenance of Cliff Stapleton on hardy-gurdy and Michael York on Bricton pipes. Now, this might be a recipe for Special T, nostalgia, but it was a stone grove, a joyful, volatile flux, a simply MASSIVE sound. Unlike MOM, reliant more on calibrated texture than stupor this one goes up to 11 volume: statily quiet music with one face(s) to the future, one in the pastoral past.

Balance was in Mystic Meg mode tonight, a motorhead Punch, a Master Pheasant snoring, clapping, stretching and stomping, improving tangents off the lyrical bedstead, fudge gaps and embarrassed titters from the 'weld really rather be in Clerkenwell' audience with his abject soterby and blessed out meta-magic. (Loved the poem about Cher.) The dumbfounded hipsters didn't know what to make of his panic button-pushing ('Yung! Yung! Yung! Yung! Yung! Yung!') whunged BS, rapturously apropos of... something.) I mean, this is meant to be about Super Mario, dude, we came here to PLAI, but even on that level Coil pulled off the one genuine coup of the night: a new film engineered for a new song featured a breathtaking fight simulator whose misadventures turn and turn and crash and burn inevitably aroused untold echoes of That One (I looked down and my knuckles were white), as well as being the one MOMENT tonight when the ostensible theme was actually engaged full on.

Coil departed to a lame response from a seemingly branded audience: 'We wanted to play for three hours... maybe next time!' said a beaming Balance, oblivious to the fact that large portions of the audience had exited after three minutes, unprepared for something so human or horny or humorous. I guarantee that the same 'retreat of the sonic T-shirt people' will be backing something other than how they saw Coil: back in the day, just like a Sun Ra or Sex Pistols before them, Coil will doubtless reap a hip-critical clan of love bawes who'll dumber on board the Mothership, retrospectively. (That's exactly what Coil felt like tonight: some doomsday Sex Pistols whose rebirth epitaph was Ra rock Ramones.)

On this showing, three hours would barely scratch the surface of Coil's reignum. The heights they aspire, the depths they navigate: they're simply lightbeams ahead of everyone else right now. They've thrown down the gauntlet. Catch it if you can. (RP) □

Guarantees: Coil (top row); Sigur Rós, Plaid (middle); Mouse On Mars (bottom)

## ETHER FESTIVAL: JEFF MILLS/PEOPLE LIKE US/ CORNELIUS LONDON SOUTH BANK CENTRE UK

BY KEN HOLLINGS

It seems appropriate that May Day should have been chosen for the first British screening of Jeff Mills' reworked version of Fritz Lang's 1926 silent film classic about social upheaval in the 21st century. While the media chased phantom riots around the nation's capital, Matthew Herbert opened the evening in his Radebox incanator, unfurled in black like one of Lang's machine minders, trashing a range of consumer goods, sampling the sounds of their destruction then transforming them into rimbale dance beats.

Set against the glassy fantasies played out on today's high screens, Lang's authoritarian vision of a disaffected proletariat embroiled in self-destructive conflict with a ruling elite may lack extravagantly silly, however. Detroit composer and producer Jeff Mills has succeeded in extracting from it an individual homage to the supreme city of tomorrow. Retaining the barest of narrative elements, he has reinfused the film into an expression of order, human geometry and grand spectacle. It's significant, for example, that Rotwang's dark medieval world has been virtually excised from the movie, while footage of giant skyscrapers and walkways is repeatedly

looped, overlaid and reintroduced. Mills's electronic score powers forward what remains of the narrative, most effectively in the dreamy opening sequence, "Entrance to Metropolis", and the alien chemical beats accompanying the robot's transformation sequence. It stands as a remarkable example of Mills's inspired musical thinking, but even the most enthusiastic audience might admit that the result may no longer be cinema. Perhaps it doesn't matter anymore. In a closing Di Set, Mills demonstrated more artistry than the Royal Festival Hall knew how to deal with. Crowded into the narrow aisles, enthusiastic dancers hauled themselves at the stage, only to be heaved back again by security guards. Ever Metropolis has its May Day. (90)

Despite the scale of recent interest in bootlegs, plunderphiles and other sonic halfloos, the small Pussell Room was only about half full on Ether's night of digital disobedience, whose theme seemed doubly underscored, since the cost included some real scope for the UK scene. Philbala/Tigermilk's megawatt Hobble opened up with a heads down, no-sense digital blast zone, straining and bombing the speakers with dirty processed and muted samples, with no apparent signs of engagement. Evolution Control Committee's Mark Gunderson gave a lecture presentation on the EDC's activities like a Sesame Street presenter on cable, his homelike three-ring binder system providing visual stimulus as he refashioned food and drink aids, Public Enemy

rips and TV voiceovers into (amusing) rhabdosis. Felix Kubin's demerits, surrealistic electro-films, accompanied by his charismatic set (Julian Gray meets Marc Bolan as actors in Liquid Sky) on which Hammond organ, provide a deflated other take on the Miss Kitten style electroclash that's currently trending on the mainstream brink. Matt Ward hunched in an easy chair, appropriately, to give a live rendition of some glitchy electronic ruckus on a pair of Gameboys running sequencing programs. But the evening belonged to Vicki Bennett aka People Like Us, whose "Recyclopedia Britannica" of sound/video mixes just gets better and better. She has locked into a personal editing style where the screen becomes a wide canvas for positioning sampled chunks of "where did she find that?" video, from weird American TV, government information films, vintage newsworld, patronising documentary and whodunnit soap entertainment, intelligently bringing out, through repetition, the hidden reward of deceptively innocent bits of film, her tongue in cheek musical pastiches as well as their most boringly most of the soundtrack to the films. Don't miss this great multimedia project as it hits its close. (90)

On Ether's closing night, there was an email circulating on the Internet suggesting that when rich space tourist Mark Shuttleworth returns to Earth, everybody should do it: space costumes. It's only work if we all do it, the message ends. Bussers, after all, are tough to maintain. Ether's closing night was dedicated to the

complex meshing of audiovisual data streams required to create spectacles on both a grand and intimate scale. The Swiss Suteki set toyed magnificently with the hall's acoustics by blasting a selection of classical music favourites at electronic speeds, digitally fixing the results with electronic effects. Simultaneously lush and alienating, the results set the stage for the shameless pop shenanigans of Looper, who used a sophisticated blend of music and dialogue, closed circuit TV and video projection to tell the tale of Peacock Johnson. A Glasgowian chancer convinced that the whole event was about him, Peacock's arrogant attempts at being like one day be the stuff of legend. By contrast, The Gentle People blended slickly pre-recorded songs, video projection, glamorous costumes and choreography in a show that took the image of pop perfection to the degree zero of pure mime. Kind of fun, it ultimately left too little to chance. Cornelius, by contrast, had to know nothing, unprepared not at all, looking his jarring high concept Nu Metal into an elaborate grid of video and lighting effects that left no room for either audience or performers to breathe. Sounding more like they'd been drilled than rehearsed, and dressed identically as austere 60s mop-tops, Cornelius and his group stayed perfectly in sync with the impressive wall-sized video projections but never really emerged from beneath their shadow. Looks like it was Peacock's night after all. (90) □

## ZEITKRATZER WITH LOU REED: METAL MACHINE MUSIC BERLIN HAUS DER BERLINER FESTSPIELE GERMANY

BY HENDRIK STEIN

The stage set in the Haus der Berliner Festspiele is grandiose and dramatic, suggesting a major event ahead. Strings (violin, cello, double bass), accordion and brass (tuba, trumpet, saxophone) are arranged in a line along an elevated platform at the rear of the stage, with a piano and percussion set-up positioned to either side of the platform at floor level. Behind the instrumentalists hangs a huge white screen, which, as the night progresses, will shift colour from Rothkoesque purples and reds to stark greys, blacks and whites. Centre stage there is a small wooden chair, with an electric guitar standing next to it: a modest throne for a performing maestro from the other side of the tracks.

When Lou Reed broke that German New Music group Zeitkratzer were working on a live version of Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music, it seemed like an act of hubris comparable to that which, if you believe John Cage, compelled Reed to realise the piece in the first place. However, under the direction of pianist Reinhold Friedl, Zeitkratzer have made a point of performing some of the most extreme and demanding music the 20th century had to offer. Cutting across the

conventions of the contemporary concert hall repertoire, the group have either performed works by or collaborated with, Steve Nudd's Les Rondeaux, the New York minimalist Philip Niblock, the cross-dressing post-rock provocateur Ben Taylor, Mouslim Alkan, Ben-hadid Günter, Lutz Nare, Helmut Lachenmann. Given such a canon, a live version of one of the most notorious electronic works of all time would seem an obvious choice.

We all think we know about Metal Machine Music: it's an unlistenable, diabolical noise-fest, the product of a megalomaniac who with no sense of perspective left intact: an elaborate attempt to alienate a major record label; a cynical joke played on a desperate audience. But here we are, 25 years after the fact, in a Berlin concert hall, as part of a major contemporary music festival that also includes works by Cage, Stockhausen, Tan Dun, Christian Wolff, Erik Satie, Wacken for a performance that will either elevate it to hi-art, or fall flat on its ass trying.

Regardless of Reed's motives for making the record, the mistake most critics, composers and fans have made in the 25 years since the release of Metal Machine Music has been to hear it in the context of the work Reed was producing in the years following his departure from the Velvet Underground: is the pantheistic rock 'n' roll of Transformer, Rock 'N' Roll Animal, Sally Coo! Dance. Sorry to state the bleedin' obvious here, and forgive me for coming out all

charitable on his ass, but to understand Metal Machine Music in terms of Reed's own career you have to look further back, to New York in the mid-1960s, and the limited artistic and cultural milieu that spawned The Velvet Underground. In particular there was The Theater Of Eternal Music, which, as we all know, included two future members of The Velvet, wall player John Cale and percussionist Angus MacLise, and which developed a music and mode of performance that explored previously uncharted realms of volume, atonality and duration. Under the direction of La Monte Young, The Theater Of Eternal Music unleashed improvised droneworks, played on detuned, highly amplified stringed instruments, that evolved into organic masses of seething sound during performances that would last throughout the night.

All right then said, that could also serve as an apt description of Zeitkratzer's take on Lou's anti-songbook. In fact what was most striking about Zeitkratzer's performance (which was sight-read from a time-coded score transcribed from the original vinyl version by Reinhold Friedl, Ulrich Krieger and Luca Narducci) is how similar it sounded to Theater Of Eternal Music recordings such as Day Of Niagara. In contrast to the long, drawn out bow strokes employed by Cale and violinist Tony Conrad to generate the primordial drone that suspended the performances of The Theater Of Eternal Music in such extreme tension, Zeitkratzer's string players

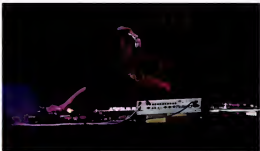
rike their instruments in furious spasms, in order to reproduce Metal Machine Music's 31 Vitae Drone frequency patterns and lamented feedback squalls. Against all the odds,

considering the venue and context, their returned strung, bowed cylinders and speed piano strings tears a hole in the temperate fabric to reconnect Metal Machine Music with its origins deep inside Manhattan's post-war avant garde.

Ironically, it's only when Lou joined the ensemble on stage that the music disconnected from these deep antecedents. Arriving at his position centre-stage in the midst of a blizzard of buzzing note-clouds and screaming overtones, and dressed head to foot in black leather, he takes his seat, raises his hand aloft, signals the group to come to a dead stop, then proceeds into a feedback solo that sounds strangely conventional compared to what has just gone before. When the ensemble burst back in, the guitar is sucked into the sound like a beam of light being bent into the gaping maw of a monstrous black hole.

Inspiring at a level halfway between the gut and the synapses, this performance turned what many still regard as a sick joke into a celebration of the noise aesthetic that has spawned some of the most extraordinary music of our time. Even Lou seemed to enjoy himself. □

Jeff Mills (top); Cornelius (middle); Lou Reed with Zeitkratzer (bottom)



PHOTOS: ANTONIO NEGAND BILLO; BRUNO LUSA; CCMANALIZ; KAIBENNETT; BILLO

## On Location



Top row: Chicka On Speed, Funkstörung, Fennese. Bottom: FM Einheit, Richard Devine, the Laptop Lounge of Bios 02

### BIO502 ATHENS IME GARDICE

BY DEN DORTCHICK

Hidden away at the end of an unnamed side street, off an arterial road in industrial Athens, is a goods yard with three soon-to-be demolished warehouses. For the second Bios festival these dusty wrecks were transformed into beautifully low venues (so low that an unexpected rainfall poured through holes in the roof). The main space housed an incredible soundsystem, while the "Laptop Lounge" was a more intimate affair, scattered with vinyl cassettes, computer consoles and comics. The third warehouse contained a computer games exhibition with retro-futuristic houses housing 30 years of consoles, and a cinema showing game movies like *Tomb Raider*, *Battle Royale* and *Exile*.

It is almost impossible not to view Bios as a much smaller cousin of Sonar, the annual festival held at Barcelona at the other end of the Mediterranean. But with the twice-annual Bios festivals bracketing Northern Europe's bleak winter and farmed summer, I have already made this my festival of choice, instead of the overcrowded stadium affair that Sonar has become.

The line-up of both nights was ambitious and coherent, with a programme that began in the Laptop Lounge at 5pm. All activity was supposed to move through to the main space at 11pm, but Bios from London's Rough Trade store and others conspired to keep the lounge going as an eclectic alternative to the main event. The first acts were Swiss duo Person and local artist Ceti, followed by a deliciously brief Opote (aka Thomas Kask) set of signature washes and flows of swirling static and strings, dominated by an

improvised spectral remix of Björk's "Aurora". Italy's Wang Li soaked up the extra time with a MIDI-harmonica and a kind of pop electronics which he intermittently brought to a grinding halt as the cogs jammed, then sprang back to life.

First in the main hall was Luomo (aka Vladislav Delay) performing a new set of dubbed-out disco House. He was followed by Adult, and the contrast between Luomo's sleek liquidity and Adult's motank electro funk couldn't have been starker. Where Luomo put vocals through effects to emphasise their emotional impact, Adult's clipped phrasing and processed voices compounded the heavy machine regime of their beats. Combining punk attitude and Detroit electro, tracks would change rhythm but keep the adrenaline high, with narratives of social and sexual alienation reaching a high point with a chorus of "I Am A Human Rat". Throughout the evening, the sequence of acts transmuted each other's energy in this way, pushing the audience in different directions every hour.

Pan Sonic and ex-Ginsu/Ginsu Newbeat percussionist FM Einheit reprised their occasional collaboration. The Finnish duo's intensely posed theatrics contrasted perfectly with Einheit's posturing, as he attacked a huge contact-miked spring with a hammer and drill. As the set progressed, the video projector's simple flatline signal took its cues from the music and formed snowflakes, then mist, and was wrought and splintered into hundreds of symmetrical shards and impossible geometries. The sparring grew more intense as Mika Vainio took his custom made machine in the air while Einheit beat rhythms out on a sheet metal topped table. By the end Einheit was smashing blows with a hammer and Ivo Vassanen had thrown his equipment across the desk, a massive wall of

feedback suddenly cutting to silence.

The void was quickly filled by Chicks On Speed, performing a brilliant, art-damaged set that fused the radical potential of both fashion and pop music and catalysed the rapt audience into a moshpit. Funked up electro beats and narratives of alien abductions were delivered in a deadpan style somewhere between The B-52s and ESG, augmented by an Acidic thermostat. If they got bored with a song they would just start growling, walk to the laptop and launch into the next one. Big wasp-waisted belts doubled as air guitars for "Fashion Rules" and the excellent "We Don't Play Games" while "Turn Of The Century" saw them butt punk with speed guitars and lyrics like, "Are you ready? 1-2-3-4! Are you ready?" Funkadelic charged the pace again with their fractured HipHop and Techno remixes, and Cristian Vogel ended the night by spinning some furious techno.

Saturday evening began quietly in the Laptop Lounge. SND broke down House motifs and rhythms, and although Vladislav Delay's laptop was computed by a power surge after his Luomo performance, he did a wonderfully low-key set of MP3s and effects. Mika Denia's classic "Round About Midnight" was the centerpiece, heard reverb adding poignancy to trumpet phrases and double bass. Fennese continued his deconstruction of pop structures by smothering a guitar chord in accumulations of frequencies that cut to silence only to begin again. Halfway through there was movement beneath the table as Mika Vainio, who was apparently sleeping there, turned over. Eventually he woke up, crawled out, and leaned over the desk looking dishevelled, then, deciding against a disbarment, he stumbled off.

In the main hall, the sound system that had

picked out every detail the night before was turned up too loud as a rolling thunder of beats flattened all sonic perspective. Unfortunately it was cranked up loudest for Team Droybi and Richard Devine, whose constellations of beats and melodic microstructures really need that spatial depth to co-exist and reciprocate each other. Consequently, while the warehouse was half empty, the yard was suddenly half full of people chatting. At the same time that Speedy's cancellation and Plead and LFO missing their rights left a vacuum in the main space, Adult, DJ Max Duranti's unannounced electro set in the Laptop Lounge was one of the festival's highlights, combining turntable creativity, HipHop skills and amphetamine attitude. The whole turntable was a potential sound source as he tapped out beats against the room's matrix label or percussive rhythms with his flagellants against the arm of the unused desk. Acid lines were scratched and crossfaded, and masses made without headphones, working out the rhythm with cuts and scratches until the two records were perfectly in sync. It was a joy to behold and fantastic to dance to.

Panotk Pulsinger and Erdem Tanakan turned down the volume just enough for their good DJ/bat DJ double act to sound perfect, with Pulsinger running a seamless gamut of dance genres, giving way to Tanakan's laptop performance of fabulous tech noir melodrama. Outside in the yard, Thomas Brinkmann pulled up in his Honda VTR compervator/recording studio for his late shift, having driven down from Germany for a break in the sun. Long into a set of deep minimal House and Techno, percussive cracks and beats were gradually extended and revealed themselves as samples of bodily gasps and sighs, with occasional Messianic cries percuting the trance that went on until dawn. □



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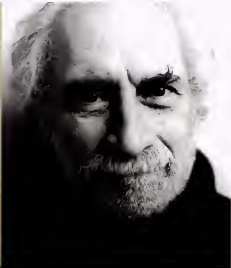
# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to **The Wire**, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, [listings@thewire.co.uk](mailto:listings@thewire.co.uk)

Compiled by Phil England



John Oswald at the LMC festival; Frederic Rzewski at Aterforum

## UK festivals

### CYBERSONICA

#### LONDON

Three day event that attempts to "define the frontiers of electronic sound culture". Breaking for the borders will be Pole, Bomb 20 and DJ Spooky playing live, supplemented by a series of events encompassing digital art, interactive environments, club spaces and discussion groups. London ICA, 5-7 June, 020 7930 3647, [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)

### DAVID BOWIE'S MELTDOWN

#### LONDON

Highlights of the Thin White Duke's party on the South Bank include Mercury Row, Peaches, Bobby Conn, Teivison, Asian Dub Foundation doing their live soundtrack to *La Bamba*, Minmo Polverini, The Legendary Stardust Cowboy and The Lanesome Organist. In addition to the live events, there is a Digital Cinema season, plus Sound And Vision, a programme of installation works. London Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and NPT, 15-29 June, 020 7960 4242, [www.rflh.org.uk](http://www.rflh.org.uk)

### FUTURE ROCK & ROLL

#### LONDON

Some Meek Experiment kick out the jams for the Golden Jubilee with Billy Childish, The Beatings, The Toes, Chicano, The Parkinsons, Earl Brutus,

Joan Of Arc, Ubersvorsch, Whiting The Larks, The Libertines, The Barknites, Black Madonnas and more. London ICA, 1-4 June, 020 7930 3647, [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)

### LMC'S 11TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

#### LONDON

The capital's premier experimental music event this year features Kaffie Matthews/Kerth Rowe/Dren Ambachi, DAF Politics, Werner Dufeldacker & Christof Kutzmann and ZQA (1 June); Toronto's CCMC with Paul Dutton, John Oswald & Michael Snow, Bread & Shed featuring Sylvia Hallitt & Anna Homler, Lol Cordill & Varyen Weston and John Butcher/Xavier Charles/Axel Dörner (2). The festivities continue late into the night with Diskono and a loudspeaker extravaganza by Xavier Charles (2, from 10:30pm, New Arch Theatre), London Purcell Room, 020 7960 4242, [www.rflh.org.uk](http://www.rflh.org.uk)

### LIST FOR THE EARS

#### MANCHESTER

Four day festival devoted to the music of Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, including a performance of his epic opera *De Matroen*. Manchester Royal Northern College of Music, 19-22 June, 0161 907 5278

### MEDFEST

#### LONDON

Claiming to be the largest festival of

Mediterranean culture ever held in the UK, this event includes music, films and workshops featuring artists from Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Sardinia and the Balkans. London The Barbican and St Giles Cripplegate, 8-21 June, 020 7938 8891, [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

### THE QUEEN IS DEAF

#### LONDON

A three day festival of experimental music, poetry and performances held over the Golden Jubilee weekend. Performers include Mick Beck, Gail Brand, Phil Minton & Susanna Fennar and Richard Sanderson. London Camden People's Theatre, 6-8 June, £8/£6 per night, 020 7916 5876, [www.cpt.dicon.co.uk](http://www.cpt.dicon.co.uk)

## International festivals

### ATERFORUM

#### ITALY

Subtitled 'Revolutions In Music/Music Of Revolutions', this Italian new music event hosts a performance by the legendary 60s improvising troupe MEV (Musica Elettronica Viva) with original members Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum. Other musicians appearing, in various combinations, include Garrett List, Steve Lacy, George Lewis, Peter

Bregold, John Greaves, Chris Carter, Karen Mantler and Les Diablogues (Johne Schreier, Jodie Liandra, Magie Nicole). Ferrara Teatro Comunale, 7-16 June, 00 39 0532 218311, [www.teatrocomunale Ferrara.it/aterforum](http://www.teatrocomunale Ferrara.it/aterforum)

### CHANCE

#### BELGIUM

Two day event co-curated by Phil Niblock's Experimental Intermedia Foundation and featuring performances, installations and screenings. Contributions include Niblock, Bataste Lavois, Achim Wollschlaeger, Art Clay, and Steve Wishart & Ludo Engle, plus a screening of Niblock's late 60s *Music Sun Film* featuring music by Sun Ra. Hasselt Kunststencentrum België, 7-8 June, [www.symnet.be/kunststencentrumbelgie](http://www.symnet.be/kunststencentrumbelgie)

### ERTZ: OTHER MUSIC FESTIVAL

#### SPAIN

The third edition of this Spanish experimentally/electronic music event includes Lucy Kitchner's *Alexandria & Aerón*, Dren Ambachi, Martin, Mr Natural and others playing live, plus an experimental video showcase, software demos and more. Navarra, Bere Kultur House, 6-9 June, [www.ertz.net](http://www.ertz.net)

### FEZ FESTIVAL OF WORLD SACRED

#### MUSIC

#### MOROCCO

Sacred musics from Turkey, Portugal, USA,

Lebanon, Morocco, Afghanistan, France, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Syria and Chechnya. Feb. 31 May 8 June, [www.festival.org](http://www.festival.org)

#### MUTEK CANADA

The third edition of this major North American electronic music event comprises five days of live performances presented in three venues in downtown Montreal. The line-up includes SND, Felix Kuben, Stephan Mathieu, Janek Schaefer, Bela Gezom, Radiohead, Håkan Lidby, Atom Heart, Jan Jelinek, Timberland, AGF, Vladimir Deloy, Kit Clayton, Murcof and many others. Montreal venues dates, 29 May-2 June, 001 514 847 1242, [www.mutek.ca](http://www.mutek.ca)

#### NEW FORMS THE NETHERLANDS

Café, John Cope, Little Als, Biosphere, Fennesz, Hazeel, Hector Reviles and others play at this mixed media event which also includes films and installations. Den Haag Theater Aan Het Spa, 7-8 June, 00 31 70 3465272, [www.pasid.nl](http://www.pasid.nl)

#### SONAR SPAIN

The ninth edition of this Festival of Advanced Music and Multimedia Art, which is now the main event on the global electronic music calendar. The huge line-up includes live performances by Anty Lindsey, Pet Shop Boys, Yo La Tengo, Tuxedomoon, Lamb, Radiohead, Antipop Consortium, Janek Schaefer, Yasuhiro Tera, Christian Marclay, Tilo & Zbigniew Karłowicz, Pan Sonic & Peaches, Axel Dörner & Agutí, Fernández, Osmotic Orchestra, Manilla, KID606, Cex, Webby, Chessie, Safety Scissors, Murcof and more; DJ sets by Jeff Mills, Carl Cox, Richie Hawtin, Arthur Baker, Roger Sanchez, Alison Goldfrapp, Mr Scruff, Mr Len, Kirk Degbeig, DJ Rupture, DJ and more; plus label showcases, Sonic Process exhibition, radio fair and more. This is an event you can shake a stick at. Barcelona CGO, 13-15 June, [www.sonar.es](http://www.sonar.es)

#### SOUNDING THE MARGINS: PAULINE OLIVEROS RETROSPECTIVE USA

A festival that celebrates 40 years of the Deep Listening artist's work. The concerts feature The Rosa Smartphone Quartet, Deep Listening Band, Cornelius Cadogan Choir, and The Ghost Dance Trio. San Francisco Lorraine Hensberry Theater, 31 May-2 June, 001 415 398 7229, [www.mendingall.org](http://www.mendingall.org)

#### VERSUS ELECTRONICS SPAIN

One-day electronic music festival organised by a pan-European coalition of labels including spa.RK, Expanding, Worm Interzone, Sontecula and New Spark. Among those appearing live are Vexx, Karsten Pfum, Dja Bengtsson, Stereoid, DJ Tench and DJ Shogun. Visuals are provided by Ofuse, Sids Multimodal and Rendszer. Barcelona Sala Apolo, 16 June, 00 34 93 441 40 00, [www.sparklabels.com](http://www.sparklabels.com)

#### VISION FESTIVAL USA

The seventh edition of New York's annual 'free jazz blowout' devotes itself to 'X Vision Against Violence', and includes concerts, dance, film, spoken word and visual arts, with a special Memorial Day celebration of Dan Cherry. The line-up includes Billy Bang, Hamid Drake, Millrod Graves, Joëlle Léandre, Mat Maneri, Sunny Murray, William Parker, Matthew Shipps, Pharoan Akuff, Fred Anderson, Karl Berger, Hamlet

Skivitz, Karen Borca, Bob Brown, Dave Burrell, Roy Campbell Jr, Daniel Carter, Ellen Carter, Bill Cole, Cooper-Moore, Joseph James, Edward 'Ned' Jordan, Oliver Lake, Kalapurusha Maurice McIntyre, Joe McPhee, Jerné Mendez, Joe Morris, Dewey Redman, Alan Silva, Sonny Simmons, Jani Tabbal, Joema & Olayemi Thomas, David S Ware, Reggie Workman and more. New York The Center, CD's Lounge and Anthology Film Archives, 23 May-9 June, 001 718 330 1234, [www.vmta.info](http://www.vmta.info), [www.visionfestival.org](http://www.visionfestival.org)

## Special events

#### LIVE IN YOUR FORT UK

A programme of live and temporary artworks in the heart of the Lake District, including 'Burning Some Things In A Highly Informalistic Environment' (4 June, 9-11pm) in which Jurens Projects will establish an open air recording studio for the production and destruction of banned records. Girdlestone Forest, Galfrey and Theatre, 4-9 June, 01229 862091, [www.girdlestone.org](http://www.girdlestone.org)

#### NEVER MIND THE JUBILEE UK

Coinciding with the Golden Jubilee celebrations (but of course), this festival of punk rock on film, which has been created by Sir Savage, includes all manner of footage, from home movies to TV documentaries, as well as screenings of mainstream cinema releases, including Derek Jarman's *Jubilee*, Don Letts's *Punk Rock Movie* and *Jillian Topley: The Fifth And The Fury*. Among these immortalised on archive celluloid are Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Buzzcocks, The Beatnicks, Iggy Pop, Jay Dupless, X-Ray Spax, Patti Smith, The Runnins, Talking Heads, Ores, Black Flag, The Sibs and a whole lot more. London NFT, 7-30 June, 020 7928 3232, [www.nft.org.uk/punk](http://www.nft.org.uk/punk)

#### CARSTEN NICOLAI: PARALLEL LINES CROSS AT INFINITY JAPAN

Exhibition and installation space created by the Raster Notion label boss. Tokyo Water Museum of Contemporary Art, until 6 September, [www.watermuseum.co.jp/](http://www.watermuseum.co.jp/)

#### REMIX: CONTEMPORARY ART AND POP LIVERPOOL

Audio-visual exhibition which features works that plunder from the parallel histories of modern art and pop music and culture, including pieces by Ghana Weaving, Chris Oka, Angela Bulloch, Wolfgang Tillmans, Julian Opie and Chris Churns. Liverpool, Liverpool City, until 26 August, 10am-5.50pm, £4.50, 0151 702 7402, [www.liverpool.org.uk/liverpool/](http://www.liverpool.org.uk/liverpool/)

#### SONIC PROCESS SPAIN

Audio-visual installation/exhibition featuring works by Coldcut, Row Motion, David Shaw, Gabriel Orozco & Tesca, Doug Aitken, Matthieu Baud, Renée Green, Mark Gidley, and Scanner in collaboration with Mike Kelley. Barcelona Museu D'Art Contemporani, until 30 June, [www.maca.es](http://www.maca.es). The exhibition will move to Paris's Pompidou Centre later this year.

#### THE WELL TUNED PIANO IN THE MAGENTA LIGHTS GERMANY

A DVD installation of La Monte Young and Marian Zazezle's just intonation epic. The installation is

set in a site-specific light environment created by Zazezle, which includes two sculptures from her *SHL* light series, and the neon sculptures, *Omni House* Varroon AI. The installation also features the European premiere of an electronic sound weekend environment of The Magic Opening Chord from The Well-Tuned Piano. The DVD installation is open every Saturday and Sunday from 1-3pm until 27 October. The sound environment of The Magic Opening Chord runs on Sundays from 10am-midday during June and September. Poling Bei Weihen Kunst im Regenbogenstad, 00 49 881 417 718, [www.regenbogenstad.de](http://www.regenbogenstad.de)

#### YES YOKO ONO USA

Major retrospective exhibition featuring more than 150 works from the 1960s to the present and encompassing conceptual pieces, films, sculpture and installation works. San Francisco MOMA, 22 June-15 September, [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org)

## On stage

#### ANTIPOD CONSORTIUM

Unmissable, game-reviving hip-hop act supported by New Rising. London Mean Fiddis, 30 May, 020 7434 9592

#### SUSANA BACA

The Afro-Peruvian singer appears with a group featuring Marc Ribot and John Medeski on a CMTN tour co-sponsored by The Miro. Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (23 June), Bristol St George's (25), London Royal Festival Hall (26), Leeds Irish Centre (27), Brighton Dome Concert Hall (28), Glastonbury Festival (29), [www.cmtntours.org.uk](http://www.cmtntours.org.uk)

#### BANDULU

Santhi parts for the dub-drenched techno trio's new album. Redroom London Plastic People, 3 June, 020 7739 6471

#### BANG ON A CAN ALL-STAR'S

The New York New Music personnel play works by Eric, Steve Marland, David Lang, Tan Dun and others. Manchester Bridgewater Hall, 20 June, 7:30pm, £14.50-£8.50, 0161 907 9000, [www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)

#### DAVID BYRNE

Former Talking Head on another road to nowhere. Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall (25 June), Glasgow Barrowlands (26), Newcastle Opera House (29), Manchester Academy (1 July), Cambridge Corn Exchange (2), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (3), Bracknell Out There Festival (6), Leicester De Montfort Hall (7)

#### CIRCLE

Veteran Finnish trance-rock unit embark on their first UK tour, with support from Appliance, Guape and Nebuchadnezzar (at different venues), plus DJs and screenings of vintage *Kuurok* videos. Newcastle Cluny (2 June), Leeds Padiham (3), Manchester Star & Garter (4), Birmingham Flapper & Fikes (5), Exeter Knaibrock Knaibrock at Phoenix Centre (7), London Knaibrock at the Garage (8), see Club Spaces. Info: [www.chunkyrecords.com](http://www.chunkyrecords.com)

#### CLOUD CHAMBER & THE BOHMAN BROTHERS

Double bill of alchemical improv and strange sonic experiments. Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, 15 June, 8pm, £5/£4, 0151 707 9393

#### DANCE & MUSIC FROM THE COURTS OF JAWA

Pacific Rim gamelan featuring performers from



## LMC's ELEVENTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

Purcell Room  
South Bank Centre  
London SE1 8XX  
Box office: 020 7960 4203

Saturday June 1st at 7.30pm:

Oren Ambarchi,  
Kaffe Mahruhs  
& Keith Rowe

DAT Politics

Werner Dafe/decker  
& Christof Kurzmann

ZGA

Sunday June 2nd at 7.30pm:

CCMC  
(Paul Dutton, John Dawkins, Michael Smyth)

Bread & Shed  
(Sylvia Hall & Anne Hebler)

Loi Coxhill &  
Vernan Weston

John Butcher,  
Xavier Charles  
& Axel Dörner

And till late at the New  
Arch Theatre, Waterloo

Sunday June 2nd from 10.30pm:

Diskono  
Danielle Lemaire  
Xavier Charles  
& special guest DJs

www.lmc-arts.org.uk  
2002 music 1000

## Out There

Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Gloucester Roses Theatre (1 June), Kingston St John's Church (8), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (10), Oxford Suddhanta Theatre (14)

**GREG DAVIS + HRVATSKI**  
Wiedle electronic traphere. Glasgow 13th Note Cafe (2 June), Gutterline Carriage Hall (3), Newcastle Arts Centre (4), Leeds Molenio (5), London Arts Cafe (6). [www.skankampl.com/springout.html](http://www.skankampl.com/springout.html)

**DESSERT MUSIC**  
Al Parka Tour: protégé Al Bocoum and group meet Rayman musicians. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 1 June, 020 7960 4242. [www.rfm.org.uk](http://www.rfm.org.uk)

**NIRMALYA DEY**  
A recital of Indian classical music by the renowned chupad vocalist on his first appearance in the UK. London Nehru Centre of the Indian High Commission, 29 June, 7.30pm, 020, 77231 4153

**KADRI GOPALNATH + EVAN PARKER**  
Return pairing of the Indian cariboo saxophonist and the UK improvisational London Percussion Room (7 June), Portsmouth Arts Centre (8), Isle Of Wight Festival (14), Birmingham MAC (12), Aidsburgh Pumpshouse (15), Easter Phoenix (16). [www.emc.org.uk](http://www.emc.org.uk)

**PETER HAMMILL**  
Three London shows encompassing the omnimusician's work from Van Der Geaf Generator to his new operatic material. London Lyric Theatre, 14 (8pm) and 15 (4pm and 8pm), 8741 2311. [www.serious.org.uk](http://www.serious.org.uk)

**JAZZANOVA**  
Germany's broken beats/no jazz combo tour. Birmingham Medicine Bar (25 May), Manchester Band On The Wall (26), Sheffield Tuesday Club (28), Plymouth Jazz Jazz (29), Norwich Waterfront (30), Cardiff Cwib For Rock (31), Westchester Harlequin Festival (1 June), Bristol The Level (2), Dublin venue tour (3), Glasgow venue tour (4), Aberdeen Phoenix (5), Edinburgh

La Belle Angèle (6), Newcastle Traveller (7), Brighton Phoenix Hoop (8), London Bar Rumba (10), Southampton The Black (12), Oxford Phoenix (13), London Fabric (14), Leamington Spa Sugar (15)

**TUNDE JEGEDE**  
The London premiere of UK composer and kora player Tunde Jegede's Let The Elements Dance And Sing, performed by Jegede with The African Classical Music Ensemble. All proceeds will go to the international development charity VSO's campaign against the spread of HIV/AIDS. London Royal Festival Hall, 19 June, 020 7960 4242. [www.rfm.org.uk](http://www.rfm.org.uk)

**KIDGEE + GOLD CHAINS**  
Tigerbait label duo mash up the place. Cardiff Cwib For Rock, 10 June, 020, 029 2023 2199

**YANNIS KYRIAKIDES**  
Two performances of music by the Greek composer PWNima as a work for bass diatonic, cello, piano and electronics (9 June, noon, free). SPC (StPancras) Cathedral is a piece for electronics and voices inspired by the coded transmissions of Numbers Stations and the cryptic utterances of the ancient oracle of Delphi (10 June, 8pm, £7/£5). Cambridge Kettle's Yard, 01223 352124

**LE TIGRE**  
Rox Gar reinvents itself for the new millennium. Nottingham The Social (28 May), Glasgow King Lits (29), Leeds Jewish Music (30), London Mean Fiddler (31), Brighton Pavilion Theatre (1 June)

**CHEIKH LÔ**  
Mbalax star direct from Dakar. Leicester De Montfort Hall (28 May), London Cargo (29), Northampton Roadmeeters (30), North Shields WOF festival (2 June), Bristol Dockside Amphitheatre (3)

**LOVE**  
Love celebrates life as a free man on a tour with his original psycho-cello unit. Glasgow King Tut's (4 June), Milton Keynes Stables (5),

Brighton Concord (6), Southampton Brook (8), Liverpool Luma (9), Manchester University (10), Sheffield Bowls (11), Westminster Robin (12), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (14), Dublin Ambassador (16)

**JOANNA MACGREGOR**  
Contemporary piano chamber plays in a duo with tabla player Ar Danish. London The Spiz, 6 June, 8pm, £12/£8, 020 7392 9032

**JEFF MILLS**  
No compromise Detroit Techno here tours. Glasgow Pressure (31 May), Winchester Homelands festival (1 June), London Fabric (1), Dublin Redbus (2)

**MR SCRUFF**  
The Swin's downtempo boho is still on tour. Manchester The Music Box (1 June), Birmingham The Castard Factory (2), Reading Fer Club (5), Oxford Po Na Na (6), Brighton Concord (7), Cardiff Cwib For Rock (8), Burnmouth The Consortium (11), Plymouth The Quay Club (12), Northampton The Scintillous (13). [www.mrscruff.com](http://www.mrscruff.com)

**MUM + FOUR TET**  
Manchester's Icelandic electronica act promote their new Flat Cat album, with support from Xuan Hebel's electronics also. London Orignalls, 30 May, 8pm, £5.50, 020 7733 1818

**OPAGUE**  
Noise/Impro the tour. Glasgow 13th Note Cafe (12 June), Dundee Drouthy Neobios (13), Manchester Sore (15), Lancaster Yorkshire House (22), info: 0141 586 9890

**PIANO MAGIC**  
World songlines and electronics from Glen Johnson's group. London The Spiz, 5 June, 8pm, £5.50, 020 7392 9032

**SDNIC YOUTH**  
Triple guitar onslaught from America's radical asists. Manchester Academy (22 June), Bristol Academy (23), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (23 & 24), Dublin Witness festival (13), Glasgow T in The Park (14)

**DAMO SUZUKI + CIRCLE**  
The singer fronts a group including Mark Spay and numbers of Cut On The Sac, with support from Finland's emerging psych rock unit. London The Garage, 8 June, 8pm, £10, 020 7607 1818

**TASHI LHUNPO MONASTERY**  
Tibetan monks tour with their repertoire of bloodchanting throat-singing and clashing gongs and percussion. Ruffin Eyrth House (1 June), Manchester Grosvenor St. And's Church Hall (2), Manchester The Axis Fades of Delights Hall (3, daytime performance), Salisbury City Hall (7), Wanshan West Luvetho Village Hall (8), Street Stode Theatre (11), Shaftesbury St Peter's Church (12), Norwich Assembly House (14), Worcester The Theatre (15), Poyes Assembly Rooms (16), Birmingham Open Air Arena (21), Goshan Festival (22, daytime performance), Southampton St Mary's Church (22), Hebbel Bridge Hestepshill Church (24), London Union Chapel (25). [www.tashi-lhunpo.org](http://www.tashi-lhunpo.org)

**TECHNO ANIMAL + NEOTROPIC**  
The Brother and sisterhood of the Bomb comes in the capital. London ICA, 27 June, £8/£7, 020 7930 3647, [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)

**I TRENI INERTI**  
Lower case improv from this pan-European. The London Bannington Art Centre (24 June), London All Angels' Church (26), Sheffield Other Music (27), London Kinkor (28). 07723 821 141

**TSENREDAWA**  
Mongolian throat sing accompanied by acolytes Michael Ormiston and Candia Velentz. London St Pancras Old Church, 26-27 June, 8pm, £10/£5 Tsenredawa also gives two throat singing workshops this month at London SOAS department of Music, 29-30 June, 10.30pm-5.30pm, £50/£35. Info on both events on 020 8558 6862

**MASAYOSH URABE**  
In addition to his appearance at this month's Instant Music Meeting, Dialogue 5 event (see

# UK Radio

## National

**BBC RADIO 1** 97-99 FM  
**JOHN PEEL**  
Tuesday-Thursday 10pm-midnight  
The mick nation's bible  
**GILLES PETERSON**  
Wednesday-midnight 2am, Post-Aud jazz  
**FABIO + GROOVERIDER**  
Friday 2-4am, Vanguard from 7 o'boss  
**WESTWOOD RAP SHOW**  
Friday 11pm-3am, Saturday 9pm-midnight  
Alpha One  
**REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE**  
Saturday-midnight 2am: Bass culture  
**BBC RADIO 3** 90-93 FM  
**LATE JUNCTION**  
Monday-Thursday 10.15-midnight  
New Music compendium  
**JAZZ LEGENDS**  
Friday 4-6pm: Archive recordings

**ANDY KERSHAW**  
Friday 10.15-11.30pm: World Music  
**JAZZ ON 3**  
Friday 11.30pm-1am  
Modern jazz in session and concert  
**WORLD ROUTES**  
Saturday 1-2pm  
Lucy Quant presents a tangle of global music  
**JAZZ FILE**  
Saturday 4-6.30pm  
Documentary magazine  
**HEAR AND NOW**  
Saturday 10.40pm-1am: New Music magazine  
**MIXING IT**  
Sunday 11pm-midnight  
Hybrid-electric mix of avant sounds

## Regional

**BBC LANCASHIRE**  
Friday 10.15-11.30pm: World Music  
**ON THE WIRE**  
Saturday 10pm-midnight: The Wire's dad columnist Steve Barker mixes it up weekly  
**BBC MERSEYSIDE**  
95.8 FM, 1485 MW  
**PMS**  
Sunday midnight-2am: Eclectic mix of avant sounds  
**BBC SCOTLAND** 92.4-94.7 FM  
**FROM BEBO TO HIPHOP**  
Wednesday 7.05-9pm, Sunday 10.05pm-midnight  
Jazz and nu-beats  
**CABLE RADIO** 89.8 FM  
(MILTON KEYNES)  
**THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS**  
Friday 10pm-midnight: Eclectic avant mix  
**KISS 100 FM (LONDON)**  
**PATRICK FORGE**  
Sunday 10pm-midnight: Eclectic jazz-rock-gaz mix

**FROST AND HYPE**  
Sunday 3-5am: Jungle  
**4 HERO**  
Monday 2-4am: Jazz, jungle, cyber-soul, breakfasts  
**MATT JAM LAMONT**  
Wednesday 2-4am: More breakfast science  
**LONDON LIVE** 94.9 FM  
**SOLID STEEL**  
Monday-midnight 2am  
Music mixing from The Ninja Tune mob  
**CHARLIE GILLET**  
Saturday 8-10pm: World Music, meta and R&B  
**RANKIN' MISS P. RIDDIMS & BLUES**  
Saturday 10pm-midnight: Strictly roots  
**RESONANCE** 104.4 FM  
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Sunday 9pm-midnight: Leftfield electronica

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JUNE 2002

Tues 25 WOLVERHAMPTON WULFRUN HALL  
01902 552121

Fri 28 GLASGOW BARROWLANDS  
0870 903 3444

Sat 29 NEWCASTLE OPERA HOUSE  
0191 232 0899

JULY 2002

Mon 1 MANCHESTER ACADEMY  
0161 832 1111

Tues 2 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE  
01223 357851

Wed 3 LONDON SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE  
0870 771 2000

Sat 6 'Out There Festival' Bracknell  
01344 484 123

Sun 7 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL  
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## CIRCLE



### 'Prospekt UK tour 2002'

sunday 2nd NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE The Cluny

monday 3rd LEEDS The Peckhorse

wednesday 4th MANCHESTER The Shor & Gorter (with Guapo)

wednesday 5th BIRMINGHAM Flapper & Firkin (with Guapo)

friday 7th EXETER "KRAUTROCK KARNIVAL" The Phoenix Centre (with Appliance)

saturday 8th LONDON The Garage (with Dome Suzuki)

see tourpages at [www.chunkyrecords.com](http://www.chunkyrecords.com) for updated news / ticket info

New double vinyl album 'PROSPECT' released June 24th on Resonant / Sonic Currents. This release will be a limited edition of 1000 copies worldwide and housed in a luxurious gatefold sleeve. The album contains a whole new side of material not on the original CD version and can be pre-ordered now from the chunky records website. Catalogue number: [www.chunkyrecords.com](http://www.chunkyrecords.com)

Distributed via Cargo (UK / Europe) Suzuki (Canada) Forced Exposure (USA)



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## the.spitz

ALL ABOUT SPITZ AT THE SPITZ CONCERTS

JUNE 2002

1. **Wolfgang Puck** "Things that make me go" - Puck's new album is out on June 11. Puck's new album is out on June 11.
2. **Playa del Sol** www.playadel-sol.com - Playadel Sol is out on June 11.
3. **Playa del Sol** www.playadel-sol.com - Playadel Sol is out on June 11.
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see office & info 020 7390 3647

## the.spitz

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The Spitz is a Danvers Trust  
project Charity No. 220159  
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Cybersonica in conjunction with the ICA  
University of Westminster and CARTE present  
**cybersonica**  
A THREE DAY FESTIVAL OF ELECTRONIC SOUND

Defining the frontiers of electronic sound culture  
[www.cybersonica.org](http://www.cybersonica.org)

Performance Exhibition Symposium  
Cinema Installation  
Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th June 2002  
@ ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts)  
The Mall London SW1  
Box Office 020 7930 3647

**CYBERSONICA**  
is a three-day festival that is a snapshot of current significant work in some art. Cybersonica brings together the whole community of sonic innovation, from musicians, artists, DJs and VJs, to designers, academics, software makers and record labels.

**PERFORMANCE**  
ICA Theatre, 7.30pm - 8.30pm / 55 ICA members  
5th June - POLE (Berlin) + support  
6th June - BOWE 20 (Berlin) + support  
7th June - DJ SPOOKY (New York) + support

**BANGITS**  
ICA Bar, 10pm-1am - 64 ICA members  
5th June - MULLPONTIER live, ZANUONS, NICK  
USCOMBER (Vib) + more

6th June - RUCO & BOWE live, SLAKTON, SPKY  
RECORDS + TOP THE SYSTEM DJ set + more  
7th June - CHIN OR CRATE live, STATION ROSE live  
(Normal, PLAY LABEL, Tokyo), THE BOILING GREEN  
DJ set + more

**SYMPOSIUM**  
Theatre 6th-7th June, 10am-1pm, 2.00pm festival ticket  
A gathering of some of the leading innovators within the  
realm of contemporary sound and music including  
presentations and demonstrations of software and  
instruments as well as the latest research.

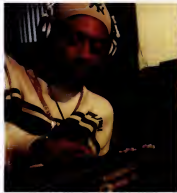
**TV** programme by Additive TV & Channel  
4 on 6th June, 10pm-11pm, Golden Square  
On association with soundcity.net

**TICKETS**  
590 / 555 cones / 540 ICA members:  
full festival ticket  
555 / 527 50 cones / 520 ICA members:  
one day festival ticket

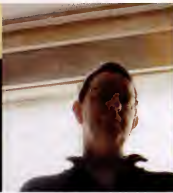
Festival tickets provide admission to all events, including entry to  
cinema programme, design & book, bar and refreshments

Call ICA box office 020 7930 3647, [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)  
Check [www.cybersonica.org](http://www.cybersonica.org) for more details





Clubbing it: Mad Lib, Steve Barnesford, Marcol



Club Spaces), the Japanese alto sax improviser plays some extra dates. Cork Tied! Arts Centre (13 June), Dublin JJ Smyth's (14), London Lewkham Anthouse (16), [www.alpha-net.net/jp/there09/URABESchedule-Engl.html](http://www.alpha-net.net/jp/there09/URABESchedule-Engl.html)

**WARP MAGICAL BUS TOUR**  
The handy perennial of electronic music labels hits the road with Plaid, Richard Devine, Chris Clark, Warp DJs, visuals, screenings and special guests (check the tour Website for updates). Manchester Music Box (30 May), Glasgow Art School (31), Newcastle Reds (1 June), Sheffield Ski Village (2), Birmingham Medicine Bar (3), London Electrowest II (6), Dublin Temple Bar Music Centre (7), [www.warpmagical.com/tour](http://www.warpmagical.com/tour)

**BRIAN WILSON**  
The Beach Boys original returns to London after his sell-out dates at the beginning of the year. London Royal Festival Hall, 9-10 June, 7:30pm, 020 7960 4242, [www.rfh.org.uk](http://www.rfh.org.uk)

## Club spaces

**BAD TIMING**  
Lo-fi electronics from Lo Recordings signs up Richard Thomas and The Chap plus DJ Kirk Uretham. Cambridge The Portland, 5 June, 8:30pm, £3, 01223 564728

**BAGGAGE RECLAIM**  
Playing live at this leftfield mix-up are Lolo, Brigitte Meyer & Viv Cunningham, Stars in Balthedre, Rachel Barnes playing music by Brian Auger, and Richard Sanderson, plus DJ Timedice and visuals from Soul Grand Prix. London 12 Bar Club, 30 June, 8:00pm, £2, 020 7916 6899, [www.baggage.co.uk](http://www.baggage.co.uk)

**BREAKIN' BREAD**  
Fourth birthday party for this hip-hop space, featuring guests MK and Osmonds, plus resident DJs and breakdancers. London Jax, 4 June, 9pm-4am, £8-£3, 07867 547008, [www.breakinbread.org](http://www.breakinbread.org)

**BURST COUCH**  
Improv, electronics, drones and beyond from Hloosh, Opaque, The Wils 21 Experience and Lee Patterson. Manchester Soubar, 15 June, 9pm-2am, £3, 0161 481 5655

**CLICK**  
Electronica night headlined by Olosh Musik from

Cologne's Kerspink label. London Hedvat, 3 June, 7pm-2am, £5 (free before 9pm), 07903 211618

**CHANT DOWN BABYLON**  
Marathon dub session featuring Jah Shaka. London Kalkat Grove, 3 June, 10pm-6am, £10, 07930 949 806

**EAT YOUR OWN EARS**  
This month featuring Peanut Butter Wolf and Modlib, from the Stones Throw label, plus an Output Records room with Tever Jackson and guests. London 93 Feet East, 22 June, £9, 020 7247 3923

**FIRST AID**  
As part of the London Biennale 2002, two events encompassing experimental, electronic and improvised music, plus performance art and installations. The first features Marcin Ptaszek, Yum-Yu, Ed Nelson, Mariana Scarabino and Synchronized Rockers (5 June); the second, titled 'Wet', includes performances of music by Sam Hayden, Tom Johnson and Niven Lucier (16). London Bar Oporto, 7pm, £4/£3, [www.wetwet.net/artipmo](http://www.wetwet.net/artipmo)

**IMPRINT**  
Hip-hop night featuring Peanut Butter Wolf and Medib. Brighton Enigma, 27 June, £4/£3, 01273 720000

**INSTANT MUSIC MEETING**  
Three events this month for Paul Hood's open-ended club space. October 5 features solo acts from Tokyo's Masayoshi Utiabe, plus Roy Parlane, Richard Thomas, scapac versus sowa (Rob Rint & Phil Curant) and Adam Sushell/Jim Black/Mick Pitham performing Stockhausen's Capa. London Odeon Gallery, 15 June, 8pm, £7-£5; London-based Japanese free rock quartet Miso-Soup plus Alex Imprey. London Upstairs at The Curation, 21 June, 8-10:30pm, £4/£3; The Baking Trip sessions featuring Les 7 Mondes, Ramsud Wadych, Paul Hood and Seanam. London Upstairs at The Curation, 28 June, 8:30-11pm, £4/£3, [paulhood.demon.co.uk](http://paulhood.demon.co.uk)

**THE KLINKER**  
This month's shenanigans comprise: Mystery Deck (6 June); Inner Space Music and The Ben Matthews Douglas Trio (13); Matin and Marcol Matos & Yum-Har (20); Badland and The Fuji

(27); Fes, Bitten By A Monkey, (Me-Wah) Chimp Wit, Tim Goldie and I Theel Ient (28). London The Sussex, 8pm, £4/£3, 020 8806 8216, [www.theklinker.co.uk](http://www.theklinker.co.uk)

**KOSMISCHE**  
Krautrock gathering presents Can singer Domo Suzuki, supported by Finnish bliss-chuggers Ordo (London Garage, 6 June), 8pm, £10. The club returns upstairs at the end of the month for Sonic Boom live, plus the usual Kosmische mix of DJs and visuals (Upstairs at the Garage, 29 June, 9pm-3am, £6/£5, 020 7607 1818)

**THE NANDINA TROUGH**  
This month's name for the Bohman Brothers' strings sounds like: Riquie, Beyond The Boon and Bourdais Saville (3 June); Dave Fowler/ Marco Matos/Jim Dvorak/John Dineen, Adam Bohman/Hugh Cowles/Paul Hood/James Bergmark (10); David Chamber and Voltaire (17); Mike Walters & Lul Covalit, Nott Auffermann/Steve Beresford/Adam Bohman and I Theel Ient. London Brompton Centre, 8pm, £4/£3, 01932 571923

**OLGARCH SHIT TRUSFUSION**  
Four improv duos for your delectation: Tim Goldie & Eddie Pulver, Matt Davis & Steve Barnesford, Anthony Guerni & Joel Stern, Ramsud Wadych & Michael Rodgers. London Foundry, 15 June, 8pm, free/donations, 020 8985 2816

**SEEN**  
Hip-hop, broken beats, nu-jazz and more courtesy of Blackbox featuring Charlie Dark, Ahnhaast and Seli, plus resident DJs and visuals. Bristol Level, 14 June, 9:30pm-3am, £7-£5, 0117 330 6778

**THE SPRAWL**  
Self-styled space for "oddbits, soundscapes and edictic sounds", this month featuring Barcelona's Evol, Richard Fontenay, Marcol, Matt Rogalsky, Bitter, se-outlets and "live music processing" by Agee/Simon. London Gabel Cafe, 28 June, 7:30pm-midnight, £4/£3 (which also gets you free Internet access all night), 020 7267 2242

**THINGS THAT MAKE ME TICK**  
A night of outsider/leftfield art, music and film, including contributions from Billy Mahone and Kosmische DJs. London The Spitz, 1 June, info at [www.tbtricket.com](http://www.tbtricket.com) - email kinkley@things.thr

## Incoming

### THE BIG CHILL: THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

UK  
First of these major events this year for the chill out space made good. The line-up of live acts and DJs includes Lamb, To Rococo Rot, Pol, Badmarsh & Shn, Neotropic, Huxton, Nara Sawhney, Mr Scruff, Poshy, Tom Middleton, Osmysio and Blood & Fire Sound System, plus there will be the usual festival mix of mixed media events, visuals, comedy, spoken word and so on. Lanner Tree Gardens, 5-7 July, £99 adult weekend ticket, 020 7688 8080, [www.bighill.net](http://www.bighill.net)

### FESTIVAL MIMI

FRANCE  
17th edition of this French event, this year featuring Plastic People Of The Universe, Max Nagi, Chris Cutler/Joseph Kacelle/John Greenewald, Max Enstrey & Spacemarch, Cyo Baptista and more. Marseille (Château Caroline Aux Iles Du Final, 25-28 July, [www.lafrique.org/mimi](http://www.lafrique.org/mimi)

### FESTIVAL D'ALTITUDE

FRANCE  
High altitude avant jazz event, in the Hautes-Pyrénées featuring AMM, Crispell/Guy/Lytton, Loandre/Mancu/Marguerite/Paie and more. Lur-St-Sauveur various venues, 11-14 July, [www.lur.org](http://www.lur.org)

### RHYTHMSTICKS

UK  
Annual festival of percussion and drum culture this year featuring Osaka's Borelens, new rebranded as an urban music festival system, in a concert co-hosted by The Wire as part of the magazine's 20th birthday celebrations (13 July). Other highlights include Tony Allen's Afrobeat Big Band, The Bouquins Of Algona, Pedro Camero plays the music of Steve Reich, and Mary Kamie London Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Rooms, 13-21 July, 020 7921 0600, [www.rhythm.org.uk](http://www.rhythm.org.uk)

Out There items for inclusion in the July issue should reach us by Friday 31 May



# a conSPIracy cantata

## Yannis Kyriakides

with Ayelet Harpaz, Steffie Büttrich, Marion von Tilzer  
a large scale work for two voices, piano and electronics

on tour in the UK

- 08 June 15:00 ft 17:00 Bentwaters Airbase Residsham  
(Mileburgh Festival)  
01728 687190 boxoffice@aldeburgh.co.uk
- 10 June 20:00 Kettle's Yard Canteen Street (Cambridge)  
01223 352124 mail@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk
- 12 June 20:00 Ocean 2 (London) 270 Mare Street, Hackney  
020 7314 280 boxoffice@ocean.org.uk

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**Mum (live)**  
**Four Tet (live)**  
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# Epiphanies

Philip Clark discovers something fishy in the compositions of Dave Brubeck



Sneering against the tide: Jon Morello, Paul Desmond, Dave Brubeck and Eugene Wright

In the early 60s my father studied at the Royal College of Art with Peter Blake and Carol Weight. This was a good era – he was a year behind David Hockney and in the same tutor group as Ian Dury, and spent his time painting with scratchy records of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Stan Kenton, Chris Barber and Dave Brubeck playing in the background. Did student habits obviously die hard: my earliest memory is of childhood bedtimes being filled with the sounds of "Desolation Row" and "Rock Island Line" as my father worked in the next room. When he put Brubeck's "Blue Rondo A La Turk" from *Time Out* on the turntable, the effect was instinctive and electrifying. The sound of Paul Desmond's alto saxophone interlocking with Brubeck's tightly precise pacing of his theme gave me butterflies. I loved the way Joe Morello's drums slowly fed into the performance, and the obsessive momentum and rising contours of the piece filled me with the anticipation small children associate with Christmas morning itself.

Brubeck's music not only introduced me to jazz, but to a complete way of thinking about framing musical influence as musical form. As a composer myself, I've spent the past 12 months working on *Salmon Cage*, a 30 minute piece for two glockenspiels and ensemble based on Brubeck's music. It's not the first time I've plundered his music for material or models, and some might say that it's time I grew up and 'composed' material of my own. Yet it has always seemed obvious to me that 'composing' is as the word implies – it's an act of ordering and arranging different elements into a unified or disparate whole. *Salmon Cage* is not 'variations on a theme' nor an hessian collage, rather it's a documentary in sound about Brubeck's cultural heritage and a personal portrait of my own formative relationship to his music. 'Salmon' finds its way into the title because I've used Brubeck's recent theme "The Salmon Strikes" as a large receptacle to pour other material into, and "Cage" because the material is cut and distributed randomly around the score. But can Dave Brubeck and John Cage really be allowed to coexist in the same piece with any degree of validity?

I think they can, because Brubeck's music led me to

the conclusion that actually music is 'composed' rather than 'composd'. "The Salmon Strikes" itself is composed of a 12 tone theme anchored by a cyclic tonal pattern, and the rationale behind "Blue Rondo A La Turk" is of a cultural juxtaposition composed of rigorous composition and the blues. The "rondo" part of Brubeck's piece spins around a major third, before repeating three steps higher in a moment that gives the music tremendous lift and drive. Its clarity of concept and quirky rhythmic games (9/8, split normally and 2+2+2+3) reflects the Brubeck that studied with French neo-classical composer Darius Milhaud, but grew up with Fats Waller, Ellington and Art Tatum. Fragments of the blues suddenly interrupt the flow, before complete blues choruses take over. As Brubeck's performances of the piece have developed from its 1959 debut, the composed section has become slitherier and the improvised blues have developed into something funkier. It's a world within a cultural world, and a complete portrait of Brubeck's journey from the music he grew up with to the music he set out to study and learn.

If Brubeck can make Milhaud and the blues cohabit simply by defining space in which different strands of material are allowed to retain their identity, then *Salmon Cage* extends the trajectory to John Cage. The process of writing music therefore becomes transformed from academic note-spinning into an evolving document of how the twists and turns of one's own musical approaches and enthusiasms intersect with the experience of living. My lifelong passion for Brubeck's music becomes refracted through the more recent realisation that any composer who wants to be taken seriously has to deal with Cagean aesthetics, even if only to find other solutions to the questions Cage poses.

Hearing the worlds of academic composition and blues improvisation in such wanton collision set in motion the compositional path I continue to follow to this day, yet around me in my Dad's work were similar sharp juxtapositions of potent reference points. His watercolour *History Of The Common People In Time*

And randomness on tensions between the industrial and rural communities in the north east of England with a neat structural play. A grimy welder's mask dominates the foreground of the picture, and reflected in the visor is a picturesque rural scene. Like Brubeck's blues choruses, the rural scene is simply placed there. There's no attempt to fuse or blend the two ideas, rather the picture suggests two different life experiences coexisting. It is also a visual pun – at first glance the foreground is obviously the welder's mask, yet the rural scene is infinitely more vast and detailed. The more you look, the more the rural scene becomes the foreground and the mask melts into the distance to become a heightened background. Listening to "Blue Rondo A La Turk" has a similar effect – is it a written out composition with pockets of improvisation? Or is it fundamentally a 12 bar blues, with certain aspects formalised?

Despite all the provoked coincidences and randomness of *Salmon Cage*, I know that "Blue Rondo A La Turk" would have to appear in the piece unambiguously and clearly heard. After all, it's not only why I was writing the piece but also why I began to write music in the first place. So like Brubeck's blues or my Dad's rural scene, its familiar strands are shoehorned into place as a borrowed landmark and a signpost of where my musical ideas grew from. John Cage's music tells of the creative cul-de-sac of contrived musical forms that are just too musical, so its appearance in the score was decided by the throw of a dice. It's heard in coincidental relationship to the embellishments and transformations of other Brubeck pieces, their pliability and remaining distinctiveness paying tribute to Brubeck's own development of his formative musical experiences into a rich and unique musical language.

Whenever I hear Brubeck playing "Blue Rondo A La Turk", I am immediately transported back to my childhood bedroom. As Brubeck's group plays, I can still hear the scratches on that original LP, but his solo is fresh and exists only in that moment. The counterpoint between heritage and now is what music is all about. □

# Subscriber specials

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## This month



With this month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers will receive a free copy of *And The Beat Goes Off!*, a new compilation from Kid606's Tigerbeat6 label

Specially compiled for *The Wire* by that action-packed mentalist Kid606, and featuring the bulk of the roster of his irrepressible Tigerbeat6 label, *And The Beat Goes Off!* contains 24 tracks of mutant Hip-Hop, mosh-pit R&B, lo-fi electronics, bratish beats, cretin hops and punk rock plunderphonics, courtesy of Nathan Michel, Numbers, Com.A, Gold Chains, Cex, Dwayne Sodabherk, Stars As Eyes, Casino Vs Japan Vs Nudge, Kevin Blechdom, Aelters-Astricken, DJ Rupture, Electric Company, Pimmon, Main-Il, Lesser, Blectum From Blechdom, Wobbly, Knifehandchop, Dalek, Lexunculpt and Kid606 himself. The CD is given away to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of this month's issue. If you take out a new subscription now, you can still get your hands on a copy: turn to page 100 for details. For more information on Tigerbeat6, go to [www.tigerbeat6.com](http://www.tigerbeat6.com)

## Next month



With next month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers will receive a free copy of a new compilation drawn from the catalogue of the legendary free jazz imprint, ESP-Disk

In mid-60s New York, ESP-Disk was the de facto house label for the city's burgeoning free jazz underground, issuing some of the most influential recordings in the history of the Afro-American avant garde. Compiled by Tony Herrington and Edwin Pouncey, and wrapped in new artwork by Savage Pencil, *Faith & Power: An ESP-Disk Sampler* is a one-stop introduction to the glories of the label's catalogue, containing 12 landmark tracks by Albert Ayler Trio, Ornette Coleman Trio, Sun Ra & His Solar Arkestra, Bob James Trio with Robert Ashley, The Sea Ensemble, Sonny Simmons, Charles Tyler Ensemble, Marzette Watts, Frank Wright, Frank Lowe and Patty Waters, plus an extract from the 1966 'Electric Newspaper' edition of *The East Village Other* featuring The Velvet Underground. The CD will only be available to the magazine's subscribers with next month's July issue. For details of how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 100. For more information on the ESP-Disk catalogue, go to [www.abraxas.it](http://www.abraxas.it)

*And The Beat Goes Off!* and *Faith & Power* are the latest installments in an ongoing series of CDs which are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on copies of both CDs by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 100 or go to [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)

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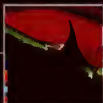
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